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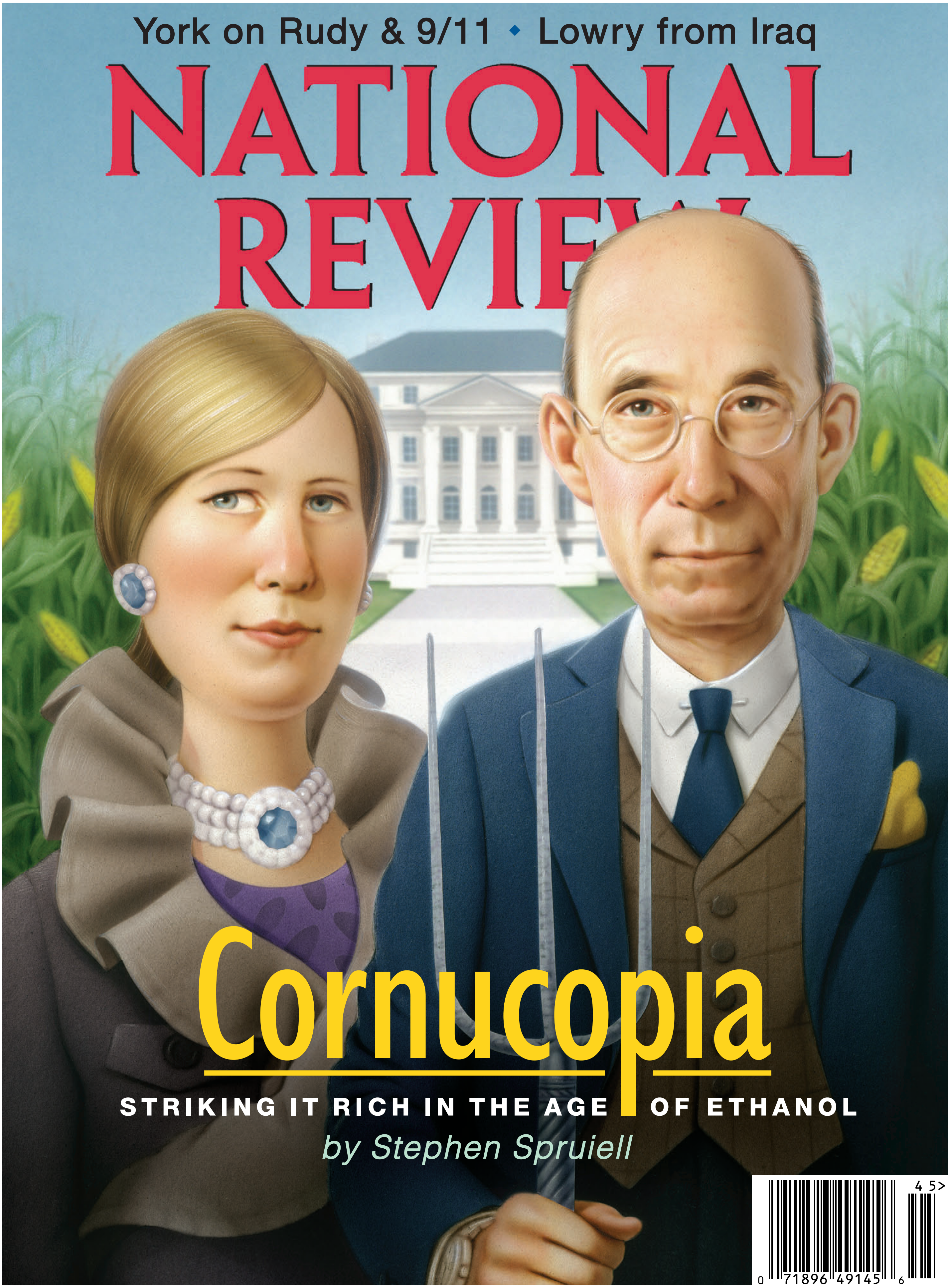
York on Rudy & 9/11 ◆ Lowry from Iraq

NATIONAL REVIEW



Cornucopia

STRIKING IT RICH IN THE AGE OF ETHANOL

by Stephen Spruiell

www.nationalreview.com

Let's get on the road to energy security

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NOVEMBER 5, 2007 VOL. LIX, NO. 20

NATIONAL REVIEW

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■ **ON THE COVER**

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How Do You Keep Them Down on the Farm . . . ?

Ethanol promotion is the latest chapter in a saga of government interference in the agricultural marketplace. In states such as Iowa, the ethanol push has had the effect of putting everything bad about farm subsidies on steroids: the gross inefficiencies, the environmental degradation, and the redistribution of billions of tax dollars to farm families whose incomes are well above the national average. *By Stephen Spruiell*

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letters to the editor

FAIRTAX: AN EXCHANGE

With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I had never mentioned the connection between the FairTax and Scientology in the articles cited by Mark Hemingway ("Comes the FairTax," October 8). The FairTax would still be a crackpot idea even if Scientologists had never had anything to do with it.

R. Genn
rgenn.com

FAIRTAX PROPONENT NEAL BOORTZ BY ROMAN GENN

It is not that there is anything inherently wrong with wanting to get rid of income taxation and collect the government's revenue by taxing consumption instead. That idea has a long and distinguished pedigree and is probably shared by most public-finance economists today.

The problem is the FairTax itself. You simply cannot collect all the government's revenue at a single point—retail sales. The opportunities for evasion are too great. Nor can you have the states collect the federal government's revenue, for the same reason. It will be too easy for the states to be lax in their collections in order to give their citizens a tax cut at federal expense. And you cannot send out monthly rebate checks to every person in the United States with a Social Security number without creating massive opportunities for fraud—not to mention the largest entitlement program in history.

However, the biggest problem with the FairTax is that it would tax all levels of government, thus forcing tax increases at the state and local levels and huge budget cuts at the federal level. This is because FairTax calculations count the higher revenue but not the higher cost of federal purchases, including those by the Department of Defense. If FairTax advocates want to cut spending, that's fine, but they should be up front about its being a critical element of their plan.

FairTax supporters assume away this problem by saying that prices for everything will fall by 22 percent once income taxes are gone. But this can happen only if producer prices fall by 22 percent, which will require a 22 percent cut in all wages—something that isn't going to happen. Also, there is no rationale for the rebate if prices really would fall by the amount of the FairTax.

Bruce Bartlett
Great Falls, Va.

MARK HEMINGWAY RESPONDS: I appreciate Bruce Bartlett for his honesty in admitting that connecting the FairTax with Scientology was more a matter of guilt by association than a substantive policy critique. That said, let me be clear—my own article had to do with the FairTax as a grassroots political success, and I was by no means arguing that it should become policy.

Obviously, the current tax code leaves much to be desired, and I hope that whatever ends up replacing it is argued and won on the merits.

NATIONAL REVIEW encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com. Please include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters will be edited for space and clarity.

Can You
Hear This?

What you're hearing on this page is the same thing you would hear from the Saturn Aura Green Line Hybrid as it idles. Nothing. That's when the combustion engine shuts down and the battery power takes over. Quiet. Clean. Fuel efficient. It's as good for the environment as for your pocketbook.

This hybrid version of the North American Car of the Year is just one part of GM's commitment to energy diversity—creating vehicles that use fuels from diverse sources, reducing our dependence on petroleum and lowering emissions. I'm part of the team in Kansas City, Kansas that's working on a transformation in vehicles today.

Lily Aldana

Lily P. Aldana
Lead Systems Engineer

GM

THE WEEK

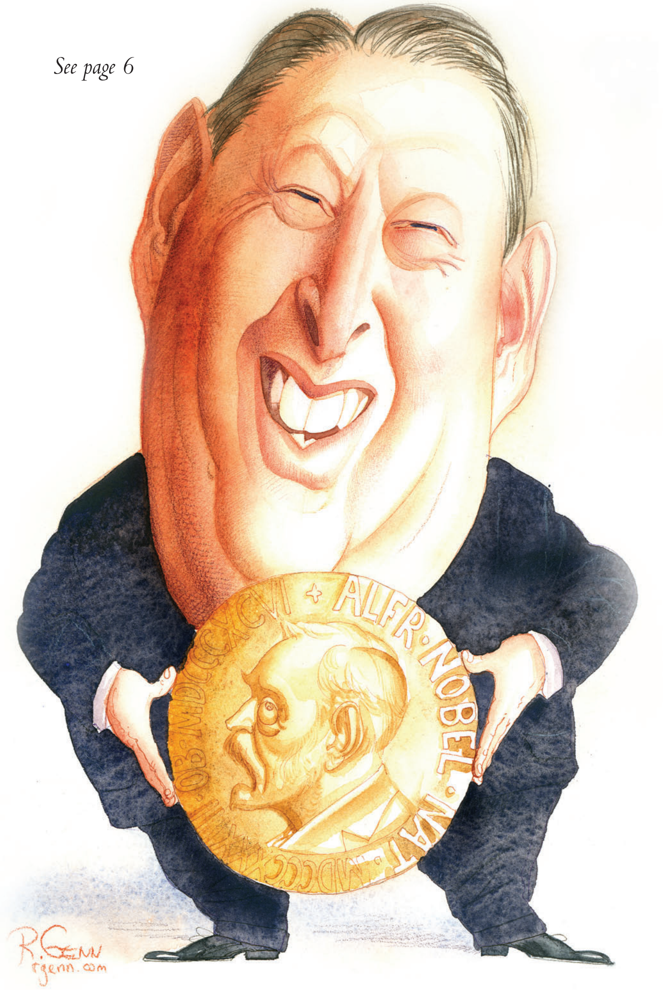
■ During the presidency of George W. Bush, the Nobel committee has given its Peace Prize to Jimmy Carter and Al Gore. We can only ask, “Why have they ignored Michael Moore and the *Daily Kos* guy?”

■ Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, a former commander in Iraq, called the war “a nightmare with no end in sight.” It is hard to argue with his harsh words for the early years of the occupation. A key problem then was that we lacked the troops to impose security on the country. So it is odd that Sanchez rejects the “surge” as desperate, and advocates instead training Iraqis and making efforts at political reconciliation that we now know are no substitute for adequate military force. His policy—and that of his newfound boosters on the left—would be a nightmare whose only possible end would be defeat.

■ It’s a sign of how far gone the Democratic party is on national-security issues that only one of its presidential hopefuls—Hillary Clinton—voted for a Senate resolution that urged the Bush administration to declare Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps a terrorist organization. That the IRGC are terrorists is beyond question: They have spent decades murdering civilians in attacks from the Levant to Argentina. Now they devote special energy to killing American troops and arming Shiite militias in Iraq. Hillary’s rivals pandered to the MoveOn.org crowd and denounced her vote. “We cannot give [President Bush] an inch, not an inch,” declared John Edwards. Hillary, for her part, quickly clarified that *of course* she doesn’t want to go to war with Iran; she simply wants the Bush administration to have “some sticks to use” at the negotiating table. And in Tehran the mullahs trembled at this steely resolve . . .

■ As Americans contemplate making Senator Clinton their president, they would be wise to consider the company she keeps. Sandy Berger, the disgraced former national security adviser, has reportedly hitched his star to her candidacy. Berger, you may recall, is a crook. As Bill Clinton’s liaison to the 9/11 Commission, he was given access to classified documents in the National Archives. He stole many of these, destroying some—a felony, even if the Bush Justice Department let him off with a guilty plea to a misdemeanor. As our Byron York has reported, some of the destroyed documents may have been scathing criticisms of the Clinton administration’s efforts to fight terrorism. Which reminds us: Sandy Berger was a rotten national security adviser, too. Bill Clinton failed to respond forcefully to the bombings of the Khobar Towers and the USS *Cole* largely because Berger made serious misjudgments about the Iranian regime and al-Qaeda. That Hillary would turn to him now is evidence of her unfitness for the presidency.

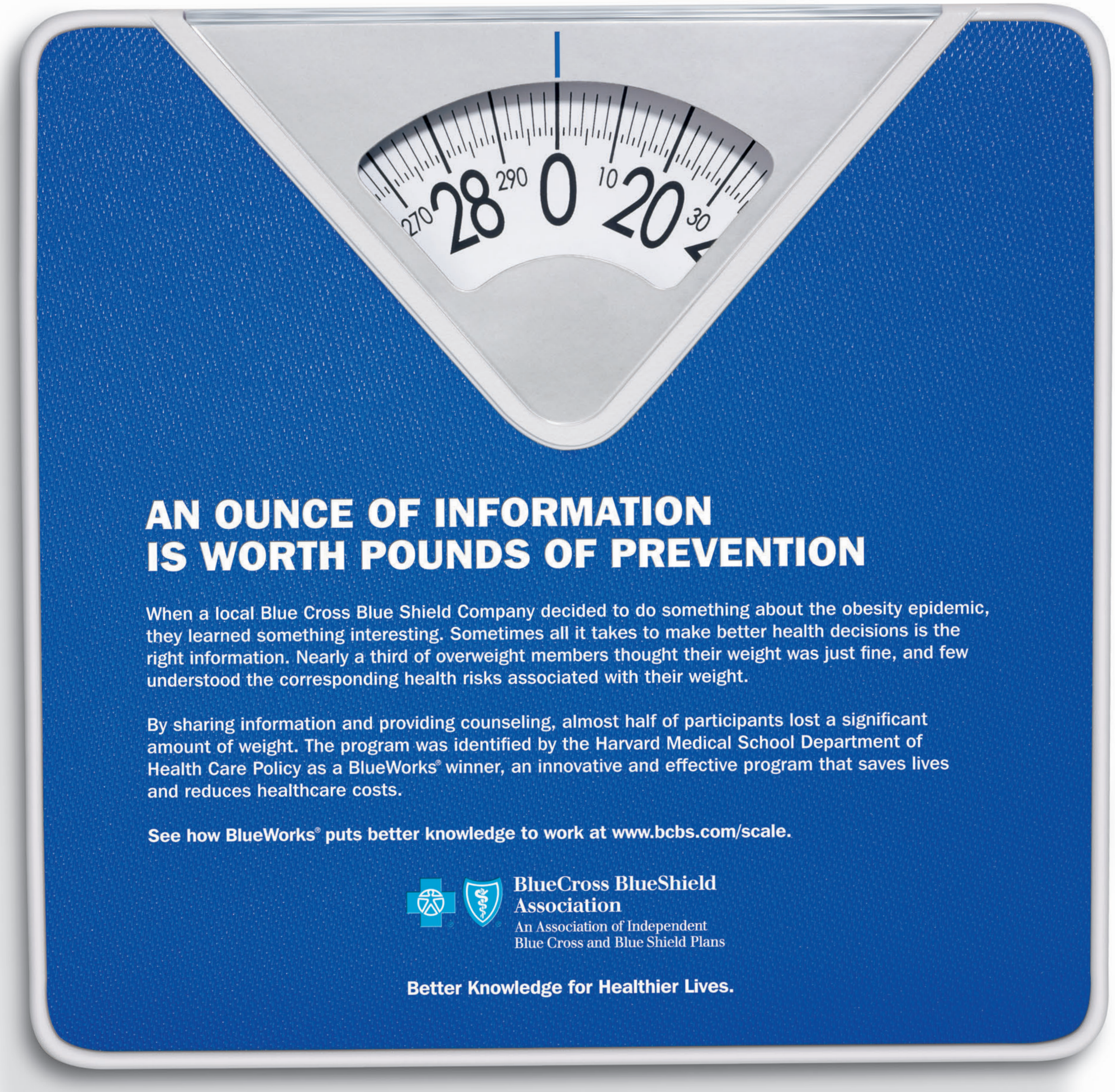
See page 6



ROMAN GENN

■ She has ruled out cutting benefits, raising the retirement age, or establishing personal accounts to fix Social Security. Barack Obama has followed suit and suggested raising taxes to pay for the program. Social Security taxes apply to the first $97,500 of income. Obama mused about getting rid of that cap, which would represent the largest tax increase in decades. And it wouldn’t even make Social Security solvent. Still, he gets points for honesty. Clinton is just making up numbers—she claims, falsely, that President Bush has made Social Security less solvent than it was when her husband left office—and ruling out solutions. Fred Thompson, by contrast to these Democrats, has proposed stopping the growth of benefits, which would solve the problem. Expect the Democrats to attack him for “endangering Social Security” by keeping it from going bankrupt.

■ Hillary floated the idea of giving every newborn baby $5,000 in stock to be cashed in at age 18, but abandoned it



AN OUNCE OF INFORMATION IS WORTH POUNDS OF PREVENTION

When a local Blue Cross Blue Shield Company decided to do something about the obesity epidemic, they learned something interesting. Sometimes all it takes to make better health decisions is the right information. Nearly a third of overweight members thought their weight was just fine, and few understood the corresponding health risks associated with their weight.

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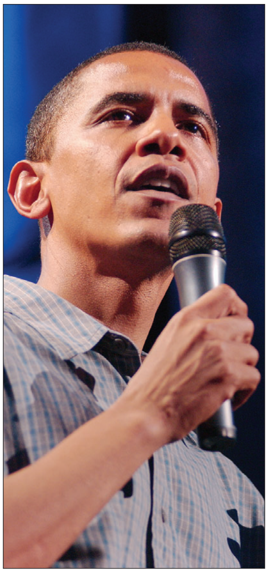
when it was hooted down. She has proposed, more seriously, to subsidize investment accounts for low-income workers. In both cases, she is addressing real concerns: the cost of raising a family on one hand, the lack of asset accumulation among the poor on the other. But an expanded child tax credit, which parents could use however they wished, would be better than handing out money to 18-year-olds. And while the investment accounts she proposes may well be a good idea, it would be better to let low-income workers—and everyone else—invest some of their Social Security taxes. One of these days, we hope the senator will learn that money doesn't have to be routed through Washington to do good.



JASON L. NELSON/ADMEDIA

■ Barack Obama said that he no longer wears a flag pin because it has become a substitute for "true patriotism." He added, "Instead, I'm going to try to tell the American people what I believe will make this country great and hopefully that will be a testimony to my patriotism." Or at least his self-regard.

■ On the campaign trail, Obama told an enthusiastic audience that he hoped to be "an instrument of God." Fine and dandy. So should we all. But can you imagine if a conservative Republican had said that? Can you hear the cries of "Theocracy!"? There are different rules for different parties. Speaking before the Democratic convention, Jesse Jackson can say, "God is not finished with me yet." (He can also compare Dan Quayle to Herod—one of the lowest blows in recent political history.) President Bill Clinton can wave his big, fat Bible at the cameras, as he enters and exits the Foundry United Methodist Church, the Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, presiding. But a conservative Republican had better keep his head down. There *is* separation of church and state in this country, you know.

■ John McCain is the latest Republican presidential candidate to release a free-market health-care plan. The tax code favors employer-provided health insurance, which increases costs and causes the market for individually purchased insurance to be a stunted and sickly thing. McCain would replace that tax break with a tax credit that applies to all health insurance. It would dramatically reduce the number of people without insurance, while encouraging competition and cost control. Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney have their own plans to fix the tax problem. But McCain goes further than either of them, by letting people buy health insurance from out-of-state providers. That way, they can bypass their own states' regulations—which, in too many places, have priced a lot of people out of the market. McCain's plan is solid, as are the other Republicans' plans. We hope that the Republican candidates will spend less time bickering about the details than explaining why a free-market approach is superior to the Democrats' proposals.

■ Giuliani told journalist Fred Barnes that if he becomes president and the Democrats send him a bill to repeal the Hyde amendment—which prohibits the federal government from funding abortion in most cases—he would veto it. Good for the mayor. We hope, as the campaign progresses, that he pledges to veto any efforts to have taxpayers support the abortion industry, to authorize the cloning of human embryos, or otherwise to move public policy farther away from protecting the sanctity of life. And we hope he will make these commitments in public, so that there will be no doubt about them.

■ It's a depressing ritual. Every four years, as Iowans prepare to cast the first votes in the presidential-primary season, candidates descend on the corn-covered state and discover the miraculous properties of ethanol. The latest convert is Fred Thompson, who voted against ethanol subsidies when he was a U.S. senator but now says that ethanol is "a matter . . . of national security." Like most arguments for ethanol subsidies, this one is spurious. Congress is debating an energy bill that would increase mandated ethanol consumption from 7.5 billion gallons to 15 billion gallons a year. But we consume 150 billion gallons of gasoline each year, and higher ethanol consumption will barely dent that number. If any major 2008 presidential candidate aside from McCain opposes this heavy-handed dirigisme, he or she has yet to say so.

■ Mankind affects the planet it lives on, and those effects could have profound long-term consequences. At a time when the Nobel Peace Prize goes to social reformers, it made sense to award it to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And since Al Gore is the in-your-face public face of global warming, it was no surprise that he would share it. Preachers of the social gospel criticized the devastating effects of alcoholism on the working class, but it took Carry Nation to bust up saloons. The problem with Goreism is the uses to which it is put. His film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, showed the Ground Zero site inundated by the earth's melting ice caps (a British judge ruled that this catastrophic scenario was one of the movie's scientific errors that should be flagged to captive audiences of students). But we are fighting a war, right now, with those who turned two skyscrapers and 3,000 people into Ground Zero. The global-warming crusade is a comforting distraction, because it posits that our worst problems are completely under our control. If only.

■ The 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act makes Americans more vulnerable to terrorist attack, particularly as it is currently interpreted. Several months ago, the FISA court ruled that the executive must seek judicial approval to monitor communications of foreigners outside the U.S. if these communications pass through digital networks inside the U.S. Now, Congress never intended to hobble our surveil-

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lance of terrorists this much: In 1978, digital communications did not exist, and lawmakers could not have imagined that a Peshawar-to-Kabul phone call might pass through American networks, thereby becoming subject to the FISA court's jurisdiction. The Democratic Congress refuses to pass more than a temporary fix for this problem. The existing fix—the Protect America Act—will expire in February. Now the Democrats want to take the issue off the table just long enough for the 2008 election—which is why they are pushing a new band-aid for FISA's ills that will sunset in 2009. A cure would be permanent, would impose no restrictions on surveillance when the targets are non-citizens outside the United States, and would establish reasonable suspicion (not probable cause) as the standard for monitoring an American citizen or permanent resident alien. If Democrats will not agree to these changes, they should be made to defend themselves against the charge that their recalcitrance puts us all at risk.

FOX PHOTOS/GETTY HULTON ARCHIVE

Lucky Lindy And the Left

In an age when Americans were obsessed with the passing of "Great Men" and the closing of frontiers, Charles Lindbergh was more than a hero—he was a promise of greatness to come. "In the Spring of '27," F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote, "something bright and alien flashed across the sky. A young Minnesotan who seemed to have had nothing to do with his generation did a heroic thing, and for a moment people set down their glasses in country clubs and speakeasies and thought of their old best dreams. Maybe there was a way out by flying, maybe our restless blood could find frontiers in the inimitable air."

But by the late 1930s, the brightness had dimmed. An arch-opponent of intervention in another European war—he had the vast majority of Americans on his side—Lindbergh took up with the America First Committee, a group of non-interventionists that included, or associated with, many of America's leading intellectuals. Academics such as John Dewey and Charles Beard, famed liberal journalist Oswald Garrison Villard, and the head of the American Socialist party, Norman Thomas, were America Firsters. In one 1941 speech, in Des Moines, Lindbergh argued that American Jews, the British, and capitalists were pushing America toward war. This sentiment was rife among isolationists, and not necessarily just among anti-Semites. Lindbergh's well-earned reputation as a Germany-lover made it easy for his enemies to cast him as a Nazi-sympathizer, even though his famous last trip to Germany was an effort to ameliorate the plight of German Jews.

For decades afterward, the American Left used what could fairly be called McCarthyite guilt-by-association tactics to claim that the American Right was born from the ranks of bigots, isolationists, and—scratch deep enough—Nazis. This was always nonsense on stilts. If anything, the isolationists were predominantly liberals and progressives. Lindbergh was never really a modern conservative to begin with, and his anti-Semitism was at worst conventional and outside of that one crude speech very difficult to document.

The misunderstanding of Lindbergh endures today. For example, Jeffrey Goldberg (no relation) suggests in *The New Republic* that Jewish warmongery was a "constant theme" of Lindbergh as well as of Father Coughlin and Joseph P. Kennedy. He's right about the last two (neither of whom was a conservative, by the way). But one speech hardly earns Lindbergh the "constant" Jew-blamer designation.

But now something is changing. Despite the fact that Lindbergh is still inaccurately seen as a symbol of everything that was wrong with conservatism, liberals are beginning to embrace either his views or Lindbergh himself. Early this year, former general Wes Clark blamed rich Jews for pushing war with Iran. Liberal blogger Matt Yglesias came to his defense on that score.

And now, another prominent liberal blogger, Mark Schmitt, says that he takes no offense at being compared to Lindbergh—by our own David Frum—because Schmitt assumes Frum wasn't comparing him to "a notorious isolationist Hitler-fancying anti-Semite" but merely to a notorious isolationist, period. (Actually, Frum wasn't comparing him to Lindbergh at all, but that's another story.) Moreover, Schmitt doesn't mind the comparison, he says, because he is exhausted with people assuming that opposition to the war is unpatriotic. He says it's time to stop waving the flag and start forcing America to be a better country.

It's a good enough point. But let's remember that Lindbergh dropped his opposition to the war once we were in it. After Pearl Harbor, despite being banned from joining the military by FDR, Lindbergh clawed his way into combat in the Pacific and—as a civilian—flew some 50 missions, and shot down at least one Japanese plane. Not bad for a non-interventionist.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .

Purple Voters in the Golden State

California's Republican Party drifted off the centrist track, but its voters didn't.

To a younger generation of political observers, California is the quintessential blue state. It's Hollywood and San Francisco, medicinal marijuana and gay marriage, self-esteem, tree-sitters—a long list of liberal symbols that raise the ire of conservative commentators. But a longer view shows that the Democratic turn in California is a relatively new, and tentative, chapter.

Until recently, Republicans were competitive in the Golden State. Moreover, Democratic registration has been stalled since 1994, whereas independents have proliferated. For most of the last half of the twentieth century, California was, if not a red state, at least reddish-purple (the legislature is another story). Why, then, are Republicans in a slump? Because they abandoned a pragmatic, broad-based identity for ideology and a narrow base. It worked elsewhere, but in California the road to electoral success favors candidates who are not just economically conservative but socially tolerant.

—Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams

Stalin behind Closed Doors: The Lost Kremlin Stenograms

Transcripts of crucial Soviet power struggles come to light after 70 years.

A treasure has been found in formerly top-secret Soviet archives: transcripts of discussions by the USSR's ruling body as it struggled over the young country's future. The dialogues—a thousand pages long and peppered with crude jokes, jeers, and threats—came to light only four years ago. They offer a vivid new window into the Great Terror and the Stalin-Trotsky showdown.

"You always have the last word," Trotsky charges in one clash. Stalin retorts, "You are lying because you are a pitiful coward who fears the truth." Stalin indeed gets the last word—at the end of the 15 years chronicled by the transcripts, his power is total. He can even concede that liquidating 40,000 of the communist elite might have been a mistake—but at least they were easy to replace. Hoover Institution researchers, continuing their work of collecting significant Soviet state and party documents, will publish the Politburo dialogues in November. Scholars will be poring over them for years.

—Paul R. Gregory

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THE WEEK...

■ When the Social Security number a worker gives his employer doesn't match the Social Security Administration's records, it is usually because the worker is an illegal immigrant. The government was set to send employers with a lot of these "no-match" workers letters telling them that they had 90 days to sort out the situation before facing penalties. Business and Hispanic groups went to court, and a judge struck down this attempt to enforce the immigration laws. Michael Chertoff, the head of homeland security, took the judge's decision as proof of the need to pass—you guessed it—"comprehensive immigration reform." Chertoff's reaction makes no sense on its own terms. If comprehensive reform passed, lobbies that favor illegal immigration would take its enforcement provisions to court. If McCain-Kennedy had passed and this suit had been brought, we would have ended up with amnesty, a guest-worker program, and no enforcement. The court's decision is further evidence that we were wise not to follow Chertoff's advice earlier this year, and would be wise to keep refusing to follow it now.

■ Back in 1993, José Ernesto Medellín, a Mexican national who had spent most of his life in this country, participated in the gang rape and murder of two Texas girls, one 16 and the other 14. The U.S. has signed a treaty, the Vienna Convention, according to which the police should have told Medellín that he could contact the Mexican consulate. The police didn't do that. U.S. courts found that this omission did not affect the outcome of his case, but the United Nations's court ruled that our courts should reconsider his appeal because of it. The U.N. court's decision does not have binding force: When the Senate ratified the Vienna Convention, it made clear that the convention was not supposed to create an individual right that could be asserted in American courts. But then President Bush stepped in, issuing a memorandum directing our courts to abide by the U.N.'s decision. Administration lawyers are urging the courts to obey his directive, essentially because it flows from his power to conduct the nation's foreign affairs. We believe that the president should indeed have wide authority in the field of foreign affairs. But that authority cannot extend to directing state courts to disregard state laws, especially when Congress has not given the president that authority. Most of the states, and many conservative lawyers, reject Bush's approach, and the Supreme Court should do likewise. Medellín is on death row, and that is where he should be if there is to be a death penalty at all.

IS THAT YOU, VLAD?

Though Mr. Bush famously said,
Peering at Putin's eyes,
He saw a soulmate there, reports
Recently emphasize
A squint that's somewhat Stalinesque—
A look Condi confirmed,
Who, having chatted Vlad up, had
To have her hair re-permed.

—W. H. VON DREELE

■ American military officials believe, in the words of the *Washington Post*, that we have "dealt devastating and perhaps irreversible blows to al-Qaeda in Iraq." According to the *Post*, some generals even favor a declaration of victory over the terror group. A declaration would be premature, because al-Qaeda in Iraq is still dangerous. It is trying to relocate northward from sanctuaries around the country from which it has been rousted, and is still capable of assassinations and bombings. But the surge has al-Qaeda on the run and has contributed to a wave of Sunni security volunteers who are changing the landscape of the war (see Richard Lowry's piece on page 38). Considering that defeating al-Qaeda—along with checking Iran—is a strategic objective of the war about which there can be no argument, one would expect our success to be hailed here at home. Instead, the debate over the war continues the same as ever, impervious to news that doesn't fit a narrative of despair—even when it is trumpeted on the front page of the *Washington Post*.

■ Behind closed doors, the October 12 meeting in Russia between Vladimir Putin and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was reportedly businesslike—as opposed to the public theatrics that immediately preceded it. Putin not only insulted his guests by keeping them waiting for more than 40 minutes, he also mocked U.S. plans to build a missile-defense radar in the Czech Republic and ten interceptors in Poland: "We may decide someday to put missile-defense systems on the moon, but before we get to that we may lose a chance for agreement because of you implementing your own plans." Putin's behavior was probably aimed at an audience of Russian nationalists who wish the Kremlin still maintained its iron-fisted grip on Eastern Europe. The proposed system would protect the United States and Europe from an Iranian warhead without providing any meaningful deterrent to Russia's own nuclear arsenal. Indeed, Gates and Rice have even offered to let Russia monitor the sites. Yet Putin's bombast continues to feed a troubling nostalgia for Soviet-era imperialism. His hostility to the defense system is shared by congressional Democrats. Recently, a Senate panel voted to slash $85 million from the Bush administration's funding request for the Czech and Polish sites. It would be wrong to say that Democrats are nostalgic for the Cold War, too, but perhaps correct to suspect that they are unwilling to confront the post–Cold War world's most serious challenges.

■ Are American taxpayers being robbed? Waste not, fear not—NBC News is on the case. In a recent installment of its "Fleecing of America" series, *NBC Nightly News* tackled Radio and TV Martí, the Spanish-language stations that

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THE WEEK...

broadcast unfiltered news to Cuba. According to their detractors, the Martís are a waste of money as Castro blocks the signals from Cuban shores. But many of those broadcasts are now getting through—on the airwaves from large Miami radio stations, and on pirated stations Cubans can access through DirecTV. America isn't getting fleeced here—it's Cuba instead, where the press isn't free and journalists rot in political prisons. It's especially odious to see a free press trying to occlude what precious little light Cubans are afforded.

■ Oscar Elías Biscet is one of the bravest and most inspiring of Cuba's many political prisoners. He is a symbol for those prisoners in general. Biscet is a physician who takes as his models Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King. He is also an "Afro-Cuban," for those who care about color—and Castro's defenders frequently say what a friend he is to blacks. One of Miami's congressmen, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, has proposed that President Bush confer on Dr. Biscet the Presidential Medal of Freedom. That would be a magnificent act—giving Cubans at large a joyful jolt.

■ Che Guevara was a rootless agitator who helped enslave one country not his own, and was killed trying to enslave another. He was also a sadistic brute who enjoyed executing prisoners. Forty years after his death he is the poster boy of Communist Cuba, and an icon of hip in countries that enjoy the freedoms he detested. About the only people in the world willing to clip his wings these days are Iranian theocrats. Two of Guevara's children were invited to a conference in Tehran, devoted to the usual anti-Americanisms, but they balked when an Iranian speaker declared that Guevara and Castro believed in God. "My father . . . never met God," Aleida Guevara protested, before being shushed. Aleida does not understand revolutionary dynamics; the cause of destruction is never-ending, and must take whatever form is most opportune.

■ President Bush met with the Dalai Lama, which, among other things, comforted those who object to his planned visit to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. How interesting it would be if he invited the Dalai Lama to sit in his Olympic box. Recently, several Tibetan boys—aged 15—were arrested, after they scribbled graffiti calling for the Dalai Lama's return. The Chinese government has not killed them; but it has used electric prods on them. Free people need to decide: Are they with the Tibetans or the people with the electric prods?

■ Robert Mugabe is the grotesque tyrant who, having taken power in Zimbabwe in 1980, broke all opposition, white and black, and led his country to abjection. Britain's prime minister, Gordon Brown, announced he would not attend an EU-Africa summit in Lisbon in December if Mugabe were there. This was only just (though justice delayed), for Britain was responsible for the post-colonial deal that elevated Mugabe in the first place. But South Africa is quietly unhappy with Brown's stance, which it believes will complicate negotiations between Mugabe and Zimbabwe's forlorn opposition. South Africa's efforts to ameliorate Mugabe's regime are also long-delayed, since South Africa has been his international patron and protector. Meanwhile Zimbabweans suffer and starve.

ED OUDENAARDEN/AFP

■ Ayaan Hirsi Ali is the latest to find herself in the position of Salman Rushdie, under sentence of death from Muslim extremists, and therefore in need of security guards round the clock. This crisis arose because she had collaborated with Theo van Gogh on a film about the suffering of women in Islam. A fanatic butchered van Gogh in the street and warned that she would be murdered next. Since she is a Dutch citizen, the Dutch government has been paying the costs, apparently $2.8 million a year. That same Dutch government forced her to resign from parliament, and in effect dictated her move to a think tank in the United States. The Dutch government's latest decision is to protect her only in Holland, and she has therefore been obliged to return there, which of course exposes her to greater danger. Is it meanness of purse or spirit, or both? Jan Peter Balkenende, the Dutch prime minister, has recommended that she leave the country altogether. The struggle to create an open and tolerant Muslim world is difficult, but not hopeless. Deploying the weapons of reason and enlightenment, Hirsi Ali is at the forefront of this struggle. To treat her like this shames the Dutch nation, and hands a victory to Islamist terror.

■ The liberal reaction to Clarence Thomas's memoir has been fairly uniform. He is said 1) to be wallowing in self-pity and bitterness over Anita Hill's allegations, and 2) to have turned his back on his fellow blacks by reading the Constitution to forbid racial preferences. Both critiques are hogwash. Liberals are not persuasive in making the case that Hill was telling the truth. But if she wasn't, then *of course* Thomas would look back on the accusations with anger. What was Thomas supposed to do? Gloss over the episode? We can imagine what liberals would have said in that case. Thomas, meanwhile, believes that racial preferences neither help blacks nor comply with the Constitution. Should he violate his judicial oath to further policies that he thinks undermine blacks? We detect in the commentary a note of bitterness about the events of 1991: Liberals have not gotten over their failure to bork Justice Thomas. They should get over it.

■ When we last checked in on the hapless Harry Reid, he and Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and 38 other Senate Democrats had just sent a letter to Clear Channel Communications urging its CEO to "publicly repudiate" some

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Back in 1933, the single most important watch ever built was engineered for a quiet millionaire collector named Henry Graves. It took over three years and the most advanced horological technique to create the multifunction masterpiece. This one-of-a-kind watch was to become the most coveted piece in the collection of the Museum of Time near Chicago. Recently this ultra-rare innovation was auctioned off for the record price of $11,030,000 by Sotheby's to a secretive anonymous collector. Now the watch is locked away in a private vault in an unknown location. We believe that a classic like this should be available to true watch aficionados, so Stauer replicated the exact Graves design in the limited edition Graves '33.

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comments Rush Limbaugh made on his radio program. Limbaugh had been discussing the sad case of one Jesse Adam Macbeth, a basic-training dropout who lied about serving in Iraq and committing all sorts of atrocities there. Limbaugh made reference to the antiwar movement's eagerness to believe even the most farfetched tales of such "phony soldiers." A liberal group called Media Matters took his words out of context and tendentiously implied that Limbaugh had called real veterans who oppose the war "phony." This prompted Reid, always willing to pander to his far-left base, to demand a condemnation from Clear Channel, whose CEO replied with a carefully worded yet firm no. Now Rush is having a little fun at Reid's expense, for a good cause. He is auctioning off Reid's letter on eBay and donating the proceeds to a charity that helps the families of fallen Marines and law-enforcement officers. As of this writing, the bidding has reached $65,000.

■ National Review takes a proprietary interest in Dartmouth College, thanks to senior editor Jeffrey Hart and the many veterans of the *Dartmouth Review* who have worked here. At long last, it looks like the game is up. Independent alumni, opposed to the liberal bureaucrats and empire-builders who run their school, managed to win four elections to the college's governing board of trustees, under a 116-year-old arrangement that allowed alums to pick half the trustees. This fall the administration packed the board, doubling the number of trustees that it could select. There will be enough rich, compliant trustees who want buildings named after them to let the administrators run the school *in saecula saeculorum*. The Dartmouth resistance must resign itself to being a movement of student gadflies. It is sad that principles and fun should be opposed to power, but it is not the worst trade-off in the world.

■ The House Committee on Homeland Security advised aides who were to visit health-care facilities at NASCAR tracks in Alabama and North Carolina to get immunizations for hepatitis A and B, tetanus, diphtheria, and influenza. Rep. Robin Hayes (R., N.C.) asked "why the heck the committee feels that immunizations are needed to travel to my hometown." The committee chairman, Bennie Thompson (D., Miss.), replied that staffers were going on from NASCAR sites to other facilities, including prisons, but indeed he is right to be careful. George Orwell wrote that the topi, the cork-lined sun hat of the Raj, was a sign of ethnic distinction, based on the belief that white men were vulnerable to sunstroke. Who knows what ailments a liberal could contract in the red districts of red states? Better pack quinine as well.

■ In 2004, a new magazine was born: *The Western Standard*, on the left side of Canada, out in Alberta. But the magazine was on the right side: a weekly conservative journal, lively, smart, and fun. It lent color to Canada's monochromatic media and political culture. It was by itself a one-man—or one-magazine—diversity-provider. Perhaps above all, it was a pleasure to read: informative, provocative, stylish. Something stylish in Canada? Oh, yes. For example, *The Western Standard*'s obits section was just about the most interesting anywhere. But the costs of producing the magazine proved too much. And *The Western Standard* has now had to fold—in print. It will exist in an online form. And Canadians, plus the rest of us, are lucky for that.

■ The nation's highest battlefield award, the Medal of Honor, was recently bestowed posthumously upon Lt. Michael Murphy for his military heroism. A native son of New York, Murphy is the first to receive this honor for action seen in Afghanistan. Taliban attackers surrounded a group of SEALs he was commanding and shot him in the back as he attempted to radio headquarters in pursuit of advice for his imperiled team. While the hero won the respect and admiration of his country and comrades, he did not, apparently, merit mention in the *New York Times*. Though other papers nationwide covered the story, the *Times* opted to ignore the hometown hero, and instead published on that day a story headed "Marines to Conduct Inquiry into the Killings of Afghan Civilians in March."

SIPA

POLITICS

Stuck in the Past

Mitt Romney says he speaks "for the Republican wing of the Republican party." John McCain recently ran through a list of Romney's apostasies, such as not endorsing the Contract with America when he ran for the Senate in 1994, and concluded, "So you'll understand why I'm a little perplexed when Mitt Romney now suggests that he's a better Republican than me." Fred Thompson's campaign has also jumped on Romney, claiming (ridiculously) that he ran to Ted Kennedy's left in that Senate race.

Going back to 1994 is something of a theme for the Thompson campaign. His spokesman has said that Thompson intends to point out that he was part of the Republican revolution that year, whereas Rudy Giuliani endorsed Democrat Mario Cuomo and Romney distanced himself from Ronald Reagan.

This squabbling does not advance conservatism. The Republican party is in low esteem. Most Americans do not believe that it has answers to the country's problems. In choosing a president, they are not seeking the man who best embodies the Republican platform, or expresses the most nostalgia for 1994 (or, for that matter, 1980).

Republicans should try to persuade the public that the ideas

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in their platform are attractive and constructive. They will not persuade it that conformity to the platform is important for its own sake. We hope the presidential candidates are underestimating Republican primary voters, who should demand better from them.

THE WORLD

History Lesson

TURKEY is a country of the greatest strategic importance to the U.S. It is a loyal member of NATO with large and effective armed forces. It has a strong and growing economy. It is an overwhelmingly Muslim country with a democratic system of government. Its geographic position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, together with its ethnic links across Central Asia, make it a valuable ally in a whole series of potential crises. And though it has become trite to say so, if the present moderate Islamist AKP government in Ankara succeeds in entrenching an Islamic democracy, then Turkey could become a model of development for the Islamic world.

Good relations with such a country must always be vital to Washington. Yet they are especially vital at this moment, because Turkey is on the verge of intervening in northern Iraq to counter terrorist attacks launched from there on its armed forces. Washington understands this Turkish concern very well. It is similar to our own anger at Iranian support for anti-American attacks in Iraq. But Washington's main concern is to deter Turkish actions that, however understandable, could destabilize Iraq still further and put the lives of American troops still more at risk.

Until a few years ago that would have been easily achievable. Turkey was one of America's best friends in either Europe or the Middle East. Even today, when anti-American feeling has spread among ordinary Turks (largely for non-Turkish, pan-Islamic reasons), Ankara maintains good relations with Washington. The Turks recognize that the U.S. has strongly pushed for their long-sought entry into the European Union. They appreciate that the U.S. intervened in Kosovo and Bosnia to protect Muslims while Europe snoozed. And our two militaries still enjoy warm cooperative relations.

If the Turks are to be dissuaded from pursuing their national interests by military force in order to accommodate the U.S., then they need to feel that the U.S. remains a good friend and will seek a solution in northern Iraq that respects their interests. It is at this very moment that Nancy Pelosi and the Democrat-controlled House Foreign Affairs Committee decide to pass a resolution that describes the massacres of Armenians in 1915 by troops of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's precursor state, as a "genocide," thus placing the Mark of Cain on Turkey's brow. Mrs. Pelosi is now planning to bring the resolution before the whole House. Turkey has withdrawn its ambassador in protest. Turkish troops have been shelling suspected terrorist camps in northern Iraq. The entire region is now holding its breath. We wonder, along with Jonah Goldberg on NRO, exactly where the famed Democratic "realists" have been hiding while Mrs. Pelosi lights her match.

What great cause justifies taking such grave risks? Mrs. Pelosi is responding to the long campaign of diaspora Armenians in America and Western Europe to declare their people a victim of intentional extermination as surely as were the Jews of Europe, countless small nations in the Soviet Union, and the tribes of Rwanda. We can respect the passion of modern Armenians to secure justice and remembrance for their forebears even if we cannot always reach their conclusions. But how can anyone respect Mrs. Pelosi's motives, which, as she all but admits, are to secure Armenian votes? She may be compelled to take account of strategic realities before this crisis ends, but historical truth has counted for nothing with her at any point.

Historical truth, however, separates us not only from Mrs. Pelosi but also from the Armenian campaigners. No one doubts that hundreds of thousands of Armenians—maybe more than one million—were killed in the course of forced evacuations by Ottoman troops in World War I. But were these deaths the collateral damage of an extremely brutal war? Perhaps augmented by massacres carried out by locals? Or was there the official intent to exterminate that signifies genocide?

Only a few cranks dispute the Gulag and the Holocaust. Indeed, Holocaust denial is not denial at all; it is really a sly endorsement of murdering Jews. But historians of the first rank—Norman Stone, Justin McCarthy, and Bernard Lewis—firmly dispute that the Ottomans ordered an Armenian genocide. They point out that no orders to exterminate have ever been produced (some were incompetently forged); that Ottoman files examined after defeat found no incriminating evidence; and that investigations afterward by British and American military officials led to the release of their Ottoman suspects.

> *We can respect the passion of modern Armenians to secure justice and remembrance for their forebears even if we cannot always reach their conclusions. But how can anyone respect Mrs. Pelosi's motives?*

To be sure, there are also arguments on the other side by able historians—and the sheer number of deaths is suspicious. What that means, however, is that this is a historical dispute to be settled by historians rather than by legislators who in this matter are simply ignoramuses. It is an absurdity as well as an outrage that Bernard Lewis, our leading scholar of the Ottoman world, should have been fined by a French court for violating a law that condemns and seeks to punish "denial" of the Armenian genocide. America and Europe must abandon these foolish attempts to resolve disputes in history and other disciplines by legislative fiat. The costs are too high: for Professor Lewis, one franc; for the French court, a revelation of its own Keystone Kops ridiculousness; and for America—let's not find out.

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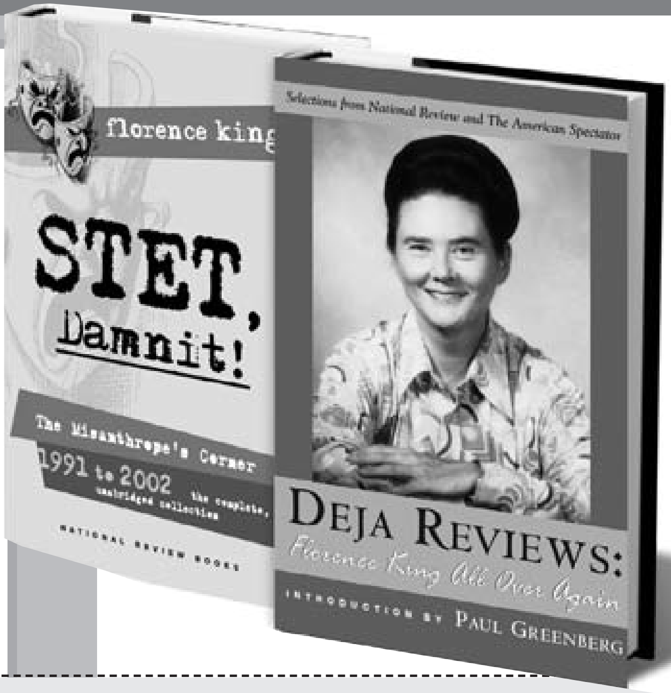
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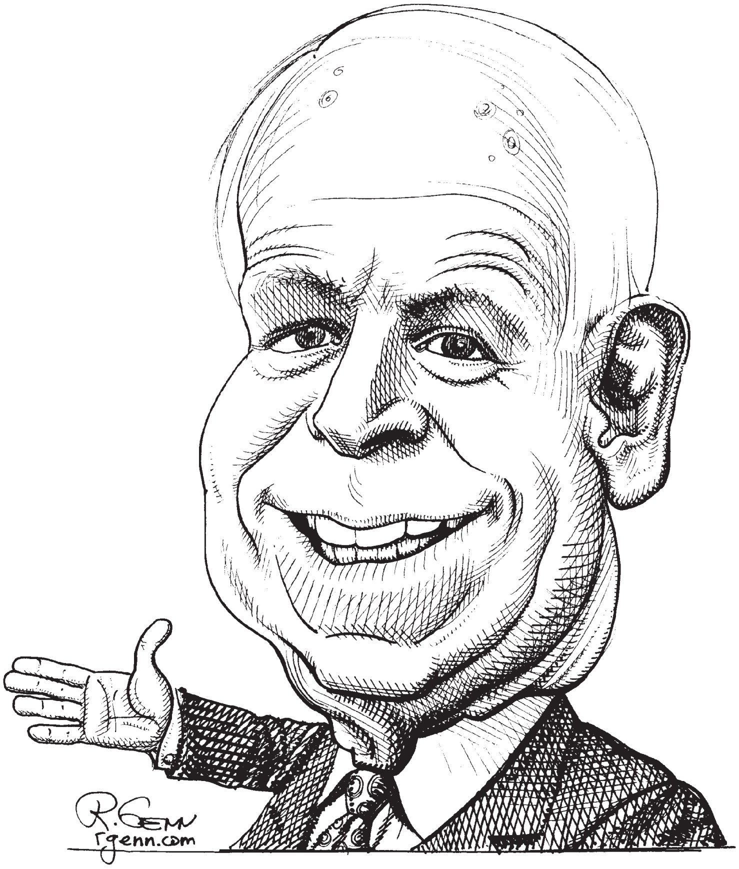

■ 2008 ■

A Second Look at McCain

Could he be the strongest GOPer?

KATE O'BEIRNE

WHILE Hillary Clinton is looking like a sure bet for her party's nomination, only the reckless would wager their own money on the likely Republican nominee. With the presence of Fred Thompson and the absence of Newt Gingrich, the GOP field is now complete—and completely without a conventional frontrunner. Its fluidity has prompted a second look by the rank and file: Republicans seeking to keep their party's base intact, while appealing to independents in order to have a shot at defeating Hillary, are taking another look at John McCain.

A veteran GOP congressional aide who has been a critic of McCain, most recently on the issue of immigration, recently surprised himself by concluding that the Arizona senator would be the best general-election candidate. This strategist seeks a nominee who will unify and energize the base, who has the potential to win, and who makes fellow Republicans competitive. He notes that McCain is pro-life and strong on national security, and has long been in favor of fiscal restraint. In addition to unifying social, economic, and national-security conservatives, he argues, McCain has a maverick image that can appeal to the independent voters who abandoned the GOP in droves in 2006.

The Christian-conservative leaders toying with the ruinous idea of a third-party challenge represent the legitimate concern that the nomination of Rudy Giuliani would fracture the winning coalition that has prevailed in five of the last seven presidential elections. The coalition includes both evangelicals and ethnic Catholics who have backed Republican candidates based on their positions on social and cultural issues rather than on tax policy or national security.

In a year when Democrats are heavily favored to win the White House, many conservatives are unwilling to experiment with the notion that a wholly new coalition, with fewer social and cultural conservatives, will coalesce around a socially liberal Northeast Republican. No such candidate has been recently elected statewide, even in the Northeast.

Giuliani enjoys a persistent perch at the top of the national polls, while the resistance to his candidacy remains equally persistent. Pollster Scott Rasmussen notes that the former mayor's support is less than 30 percent and doubts that it can grow by much. (Hillary Clinton's lead is far more formidable, besting her nearest competitor by 30 points in some national polls.) Republican voters obviously know Giuliani as "America's Mayor," a hero of 9/11—but despite this positive image as a tested, tough leader, a large majority of Republicans resist him. Even his supporters aren't well-informed about his positions: A September CBS/*New York Times* poll found that only 41 percent of those who favored Giuliani for the nomination knew that he is pro-choice on abortion. National polling by Pew Research has found that only 4 out of 10 Republicans nationwide are able to identify his abortion position. It is hard to imagine his support growing among conservative voters, given what they will come to learn about both his liberal views on social issues and his operatic personal life.

Many Republicans are also doubtful of Mitt Romney's ability to unify and energize the Republican base. Some worry about the recent vintage of his conservative views on abortion, gay rights, and guns. Others note the regrettable but real resistance to a Mormon candidate on the part of some evangelicals. If a significant number of these people stay home because they reject the appeal that the former governor shares their values, if not their faith,

ROMAN GENN

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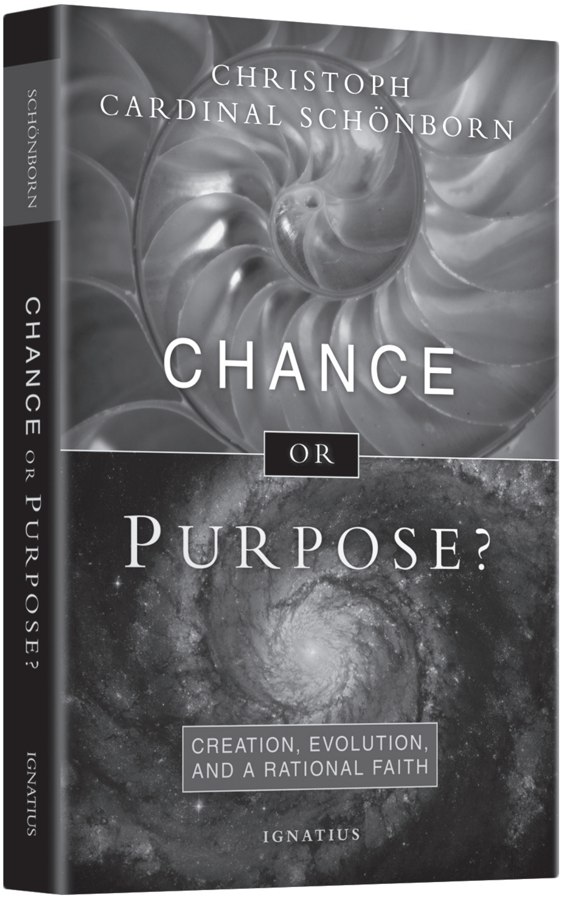

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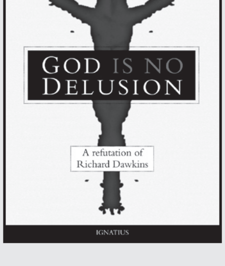

other Republican candidates will also pay a price for their prejudice.

While Fred Thompson's record and platform should be able to unify the GOP base, it is unclear whether he will prove to have the fortitude and drive John McCain displayed in 2000. McCain's present underdog campaign is marked by that same energy and determination. The initial bounce in the polls that met Thompson's entry into the race has been slipping away. Some have predicted a "Fred fizzle" that Scott Rasmussen is not yet willing to declare; John McCain is the candidate most likely to benefit from a second look by Fred Thompson's supporters, should it appear his candidacy is not as viable as they had hoped.

When the false assumptions that the case for Rudy Giuliani rests on are stripped away, John McCain emerges as the strongest candidate.

When the false assumptions that the case for Giuliani rests on are stripped away, McCain emerges as the stronger candidate. According to Giuliani's supporters, the fact that he has the best chance to beat Hillary is chief among the former mayor's attributes. He is leading the pack in part because plenty of Republicans share this mistaken view. A late September NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll revealed that 47 percent of GOP primary voters think Giuliani is their best bet against Hillary. Giuliani topped Thompson and McCain as the most competitive general-election candidate by 30 points.

But this impression is flatly contradicted by the candidates' standings in head-to-head match-ups: In the average of polling results compiled by RealClearPolitics, McCain is the most competitive candidate against Hillary. In recent polling, Hillary has been beating Giuliani by a margin of 6.2 points; her winning margin against McCain is 4.7 points.

Giuliani's backers argue that his candidacy would put Northeast states like Pennsylvania in play and boost Republican prospects in other battleground states such as Ohio. But, again, recent polling indicates that Giuliani is no more competitive than McCain in these states. An October poll by Quinnipiac University found Hillary beating both Giuliani (48–42) and McCain (48–41) in Pennsylvania, and in Ohio as well (46–40 against Giuliani and 48–38 against McCain, with the difference within the poll's margin of error). Giuliani and McCain poll virtually the same against Hillary in Florida: She wins 46–43. Both candidates clearly benefit from being the most widely recognized Republicans.

Based on the false assumption that Giuliani is the most competitive candidate against Hillary Clinton, the false choice offered Republican voters is to back either the candidate most likely to win or the candidate they most agree with on the issues. But based on current polling, McCain is as likely to win as Giuliani—and his positions on the issues are in closer accord with those of Republican voters.

Republicans are also being told that during these perilous times they should be willing to prioritize a concern with national security over social issues. Voters need not make that tradeoff if they support McCain, who has both a pro-life record *and* more national-security experience than Giuliani.

McCain is a conservative whose heterodox views on campaign-finance reform and immigration are shared by the more liberal Giuliani. With the defeat of the "comprehensive" immigration bill he championed, McCain recognizes that the public demands concrete enforcement measures—and he now pledges to secure the border before pressing for the legalization of illegal aliens. (He will, of course, have to convince conservatives that he is a genuinely reformed reformer committed to an "enforcement first" agenda.)

Finally, McCain is in a long-term, stable second marriage and talks to all his children, although not as frequently as he would like. One son is a midshipman at the Naval Academy and another is an enlisted Marine serving in Iraq.

Should Republicans reject the false choices being offered—and make a considered choice based on the man and the merits—a second look could give John McCain a second chance. **NR**

■ PUBLIC POLICY

The Politics Of Spending

Not much reward for the tightfisted

RAMESH PONNURU

As the immigration debate raged this spring and summer, Republican strategists connected to the White House said that the party would reunite this fall to fight the Democrats over the budget. By holding the line on spending, Republicans would win back the support of disillusioned conservatives, and reestablish the party's reputation for tightfistedness.

September should have shown the folly of this strategy. The best story for Republicans that month was the advertisement that MoveOn.org, the influential left-wing group, placed in the *New York Times* slamming Gen. David Petraeus for allegedly betraying the country. The worst story was the fight over S-Chip, the children's health-insurance program that Democrats want to expand. Republicans were winning when they fought over culture, pointing out that some elements of the Democratic party were viciously hostile to military leaders and that other elements of it excused that hostility. They were losing when they fought over social spending. Nervous Democrats crossed over to vote for a resolution condemning MoveOn.org. Nervous Republicans crossed over to vote to expand S-Chip.

And it's not just recent history that calls the administration's political premises into question. Spending restraint has rarely rallied conservative voters, and the GOP's reputation for it has never been much of a political asset. Polls have not recently been showing a public desire for less spending. But even when they have indicated such a desire, it has melted away when people were asked about particular spending initiatives. As long as spending programs benefit people who "work hard and play by the rules," as former President Clinton put

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it, the public supports them. (Pre-reform welfare was a different story.)

Think of the great Republican election years of the past four decades. In none of them was federal spending a major issue helping the GOP. In 1972, Richard Nixon won a landslide running against "acid, amnesty, and abortion." In 1980, Reagan ran against American weakness.

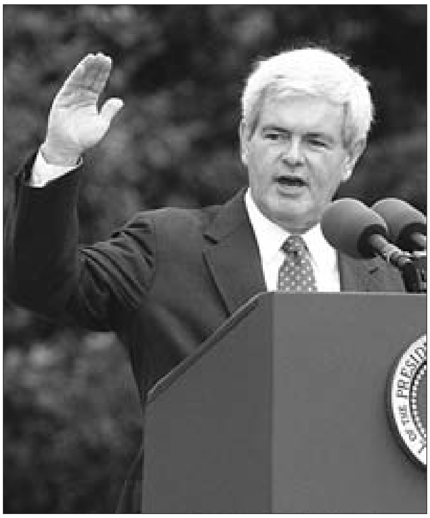
The 1994 elections saw Republicans take both chambers of Congress for the first time in 40 years. Their takeover was sometimes attributed to "God, gays, and guns": an oversimplification, but one that accurately identified the importance of social issues. That was also the year of the "angry white male." What was he angry about? Illegal immigration, for one thing. A referendum banning illegal immigrants from getting government services passed in a landslide in California that year. Racial preferences, for another. President Clinton felt compelled to initiate a review of affirmative-action programs following the election. The deficit played only a supporting role in the election: It illustrated how out of touch Washington politicians were.

The Republicans, led by Newt Gingrich, didn't campaign on a platform of cutting Medicare. When, a year after the election, they tried to cut it anyway, the public turned against them, they lost the fight with President Clinton, and the Republican revolution ended.

Like the public at large, conservatives are more bark than bite when it comes to spending cuts. Many conservative voters didn't understand why Gingrich seemed to be going after the Medicare benefits they (or their parents) relied on. In the late 1990s, when Democratic politicians started to argue that Medicare should be expanded to cover prescription drugs, polls showed that the idea was extremely popular—even among voters who described themselves as conservative. That's why the Republican party, from top to bottom, immediately caved on the issue. A lot of conservative writers have pointed to the prescription-drug benefit that Bush got enacted into law in 2003 as a betrayal of conservatism. Maybe it was one. But it wasn't a betrayal of conservative voters.

In 2005, President Bush talked about slowing the growth of Social Security benefits in a way that would have saved at least $3 trillion (in present-value terms). Conservatives were unenthusiastic, and offered the president little help in his campaign to reform the program. In early 2006, congressional Republicans won some nail-biting votes to slow the growth of entitlement spending by $40 billion over five years. Conservatives hardly noticed, and did not reward the Republicans who voted for the cuts. But every group that got less federal money, from hospitals to colleges, noticed.

This summer, the Republican pollster Tony Fabrizio surveyed his party, breaking its voters into seven groups. He found that 80 percent of Republicans wanted lower federal spending. But only two of his seven groups, making up 22 percent of the party, were strongly opposed to more federal spending. Another two groups, making up 21 percent, were actually for it.



Newt in Speaker days

DOUGLAS GRAHAM/CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY

Here is one more piece of evidence that conservative voters aren't that concerned about spending. Conservative support for President Bush has fallen as he has grown *more* fiscally conservative. He was far more popular with conservatives in 2003, when he signed the prescription-drug benefit, than in 2006, when he signed the entitlement cuts. The biggest increases in domestic discretionary spending—that is, on education and everything else that isn't an entitlement or related to defense—came in the first years of his term, when he was riding high. His budgets have gotten more conservative, but conservatives like him less. There are plenty of reasons for their changed attitude toward him, starting with the course of the Iraq war. But the notion that Bush's spending is what has alienated conservatives from him is hard to sustain.

Now the administration is trying to keep Democrats from adding $22 billion to the $2.9 trillion budget for next year. On one hand, $22 billion is real money. On the other hand, it's less than a 1 percent difference.

The administration is also resisting the S-Chip expansion. If the issue is framed as spending more or less federal money on children's health, Republicans lose. A *Washington Post*–ABC poll in October showed that people wanted more spending by a 70–25 percent margin.

So why are Republicans letting the issue be framed that way? Republican congressmen who are resisting S-Chip keep saying that they oppose it as a "middle-class entitlement." No part of that phrase inspires fear among voters.

That doesn't mean that Republicans should simply fold on the issue. But it does suggest that some ways of opposing an S-Chip expansion are better than others. Republicans can correctly say that the Democrats' bill, as designed, transfers money from red states to blue states. They can say that it will result in some families' getting worse health insurance. And they can say that there are better ways of addressing the real problems that some middle-class families have in buying affordable health insurance. Congressmen in conservative districts can explain these things to their constituents and not pay a price for their votes. The other congressmen voted for the bill, so they won't pay a price either.

The S-Chip battle may not be over for the year even after the House sustains Bush's veto. Congress is probably not going to be able to pass the budget bills for next year on schedule, and will therefore need to pass a "continuing resolution" to keep the government running until it does pass those bills. If the Democrats attach the S-Chip expansion to that continuing resolution, President Bush will be faced with a choice: accept the expansion, or be accused of "shutting down the government to keep poor kids from getting health care."

What may save Bush from that fate is that the Democrats don't really want the S-Chip expansion to become law just yet; they want to be able to use the issue in the next election and pass something even more ambitious with a Democratic president in 2009.

Bush and his party are so far down in

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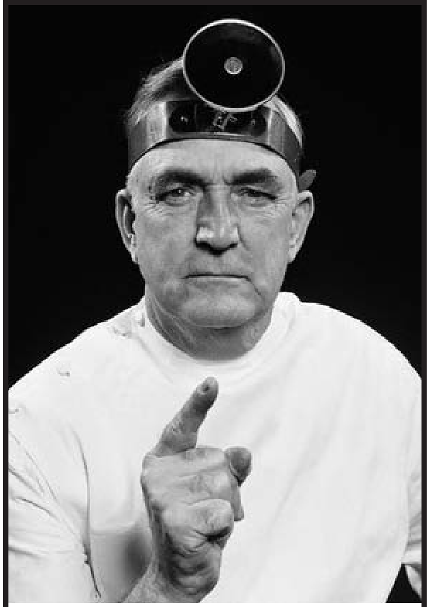
the polls that normal political calculations don't apply. If he had a 45 percent approval rating, a budget battle would probably hurt him. But some disaffected conservative voters might look favorably on him for resisting more spending, and thus his poll ratings—hovering around 30—might actually go up.

For that to happen, Bush will need to hang tough. He needs 146 House Republicans to vote to sustain his vetoes. Some of them won't cast a tough vote for spending restraint if they believe that the president will make a deal with Democrats later. They don't want to be out on a limb. If the president signs a single budget bill that exceeds the limits he has set, he will lose this fall's battles.

But even if he wins them, the spending fights will not bring all of the disaffected conservative voters home, and it won't help Republicans among swing voters. It won't, that is, do much to start a Republican revival. Spending fights can't do that, because there aren't many voters who really want lower spending. **NR**

Conservative Health Tip #79



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■ **AT WAR**

Britain's Retreat from Basra

For the Union Jack, not a proud moment

JONATHAN FOREMAN

THE British government is denying that the pullout from Basra City to the fortified Basra airport represents defeat of any kind. Supposedly, British troops moved out because Iraqi security forces have suddenly become capable of maintaining order in the city, and because the British army was provoking instability by its mere presence there; the fact that a British election seemed imminent, and the government had every reason to declare victory while pulling troops out of danger, had nothing to do with it.

The citizens of Basra—who have been abandoned to the mercies of various rival militias and the corrupt, incompetent, and murderous British-trained police—may disagree. According to one report, some 40 Basra civilians a day are already being killed. British casualties, on the other hand, are down—as you would expect, now that all 5,500 troops are safely behind blast walls at the Basra airport. It is questionable that they can achieve much good from this fastness (especially if, as planned, another 1,000 troops are brought home by Christmas). Understandably, the extremist militias are scenting panic and claiming victory. And retired British commanders believe the withdrawal from Basra guarantees a bloody endgame—with rocket attacks against the last British convoys to leave for Kuwait, and mass beheadings of locals who had worked for the infidel.

The British government insists things aren't that bad. After all, the final column of armored vehicles from the Basra Palace base got to its new home without a shot being fired, and a recent drive through the city by a battle group on its way to the Iranian border also went untouched.

However, the truth seems to be that the British purchased their quiet departure from Basra by making deals with the city's main militias, deals that included the release of high-value prisoners. Moreover, if Basra is relatively quiet—there are fewer bombings and assassinations than earlier in the year—there are more convincing and troubling explanations for this than a miraculous improvement in local Iraqi forces or the mere absence of British targets for militiamen to fire at. Primarily, it reflects the fact that the British in Basra long ago ceded effective control of the streets to the militias. Also, the Mahdi Army militia has temporarily suspended operations while Moqtada Sadr struggles to impose some control on his followers; one widespread rumor has it that he has been promised free rein in Basra if he allows the British to execute their retreat in peace.

As students of various post-colonial retreats know, Basra wouldn't be the first place where British authorities have secured a kind of peace by handing power to the biggest, toughest gang in town. In Basra this has required turning a blind eye to violent militia activity, including political assassinations and the ethnic cleansing of Sunnis and Christians.

It is widely believed that pressure from Downing Street to limit casualties was behind this pusillanimous approach. Some commanders resisted it: It goes against the grain of an army that is generally much less risk-averse than ours. But efforts over the last year to retake militia-controlled sections of the city had been hobbled by the small size of the British garrison and its lack of air support (Britain's effective attack helicopters are in Afghanistan).

So what happened? How did the British force that took the city in 2003 and ruled it almost without incident until the Mahdi Army rebellion of the spring of 2004 manage to lose dominance?

Inadequate troop numbers have been a key factor. So has aggressive and effective Iranian intelligence activity. It certainly didn't help that the reconstruction side of the "hearts and minds" effort was an abject

Mr. Foreman, a former film critic and columnist for the *New York Post*, has been an embed with both U.S. and British troops in Iraq.

NATIONAL MARCH OF REMEMBRANCE

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One of the darkest pages in Ukraine's history is the Genocide of 1932-33, during which 10 million innocent victims were starved to death through a deliberate Soviet policy to crush the nationally conscious Ukrainian peasantry. The Ukrainian Genocide ranks among the worst cases of man's inhumanity towards man, and is perhaps the most extreme example of the use of food as a weapon.

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March begins at 11:45AM

Final Destination:

St. Patrick's Cathedral
Solemn Requiem Service at 2PM
to commence
the 75th Anniversary of the Holodomor!

failure. Four years after liberation, Basra remains a basketcase, filthy and rundown even by Iraqi standards. It is true that Saddam deliberately impoverished this once-wealthy port city, but if you compare Basra to Sadr City—the vast Shiite slum in Baghdad, which has an even larger population in a smaller area—the latter looks almost First World, thanks to the millions of dollars in public works poured into the area by the Coalition. Apparently officials in DFID (the British equivalent of USAID) and other British government agencies were unable or unwilling to back up the military. Indeed DFID was so slow, fearful, and unenthusiastic about development work in Iraq that mere mention of its name sends British military officials into a fury.

British troops also had to cope with lack of support from the media and general public at home. It didn't help morale that there was virtually no media coverage of their work—except when they suffered casualties. The BBC never even had a bureau in Basra to cover the biggest British deployment in decades. The main images the British public has seen of its troops in Iraq are of bullying torturers (British lawyers actively trawled Basra looking for "victims" who would sue the British government), IED victims, and garrisons besieged by angry mobs. The American blogger Michael Yon's two accounts of missions with highly effective British troops—effective despite lack of helicopter cover—have no equivalent in U.K. coverage.

While ordinary soldiers are still highly motivated, some British commanders seem to have been demoralized or convinced by the relentless British media drumbeat against the war. This is a more common phenomenon among officers drawn from the traditional upper-middle class with its ambient anti-Americanism and tribal dislike for Tony Blair's New Labour. The expectation that Britain might soon pull out of Iraq also contributed to what one U.K. security official described to me as an attitude of "batten down the hatches and wait out the storm."

Rory Stewart, a deputy governor in Maysan in 2003–4, has a telling anecdote (in his book *The Prince of the Marshes*) about a British major who allowed an armed Sadrist mob to sack the offices of the Iraqi governor. The major could have ordered his men to open fire, but chose not to do so because, he said, it wasn't worth risking lives to defend mere property. The Iraqi governor whose building had just been trashed was furious. He knew that the British would never have allowed such an outrage at home. And—unlike the major—he understood that mob violence would now increase and many lives would be lost as a result of this surrender.

Similar diffidence and naïveté may explain the biggest single failure of the British mission in Basra: the botched attempt to reform the Iraqi police there. This has been such a disaster that you can forgive U.S. officers—who have endured years of condescending lectures about British counterinsurgency brilliance—for seeing their British counterparts as irredeemably smug and deluded.

An institutional arrogance bedeviled the Basra mission. British commanders couldn't or wouldn't see that strategies used in Northern Ireland wouldn't necessarily work in Southern Iraq.

As any counterinsurgency-trained British soldier will tell you, one of the keys to British success in places like Kenya and Oman (where U.K. advisers helped suppress a rebellion between 1970 and 1975) was "turning poachers into gamekeepers": They would win over captured rebels and send them out to fight their former comrades. While the British counterinsurgency record isn't nearly as golden as many British officers believe (they tend to forget the bugout from Aden exactly 40 years ago), this was an effective strategy.

In Basra, however, it took the form of incorporating unreconstructed militia members into the police without any serious effort to alter or even test their allegiance. The result was predictable: The militia-dominated Basra police terrorized the population. They then murdered American reporter Steven Vincent for reporting the police-militia nexus. Eventually the British found themselves assaulting police stations to rescue their own captured personnel.

In general, an institutional arrogance bedeviled the Basra mission. British commanders couldn't or wouldn't see that strategies used in Northern Ireland wouldn't necessarily work in Southern Iraq. As an Australian colonel said to me in Basra in 2005, "The Brits keep going on about Belfast and the great job they supposedly did there. Well this isn't Belfast and if they don't understand that, they're going to get in a lot of trouble." For example, it rarely occurred to British commanders in Southern Iraq that their policy of restraint might be misinterpreted as cowardice by the militias and a population used to authoritarian rule. (I well remember a British major turning to me from the front of his Land Rover as a report came over the radio of a sentry post coming under fire. Proudly he ordered his troops not to return fire. Within weeks his base was under constant attack.) They also tended to forget the coerciveness of Britain's pre–Northern Ireland "hearts and minds" campaigns: In Basra, there were carrots but few sticks.

The British also overestimated their familiarity with the Arab world. Most recent British military experience of the Mideast is confined to such Sunni monarchies as Jordan and Oman. Whatever affection may be felt for the British in those countries, Iraq's Shiites understandably have no love for Britain. They well remember that it was the British who installed the Sunni minority in power. The story of the occupation might have been very different if American troops had patrolled Basra and British troops had been sent up to Baghdad.

There is no question that British army tradecraft is superb when it comes to patrolling or gathering intelligence. You just have to watch their infantry spread out down an Iraqi street—keeping exactly the right distance from walls and between each man to maximize protection from snipers and IEDs—to see how much they've learned over decades of urban foot patrols. But the tightest discipline and best tactics in the world mean little if you can't tell the difference between Belfast and Basra, and you are too impressed with your past battle honors to recognize and learn from your own mistakes. **NR**

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■ CULTURE WATCH

Doris Lessing Wins

But not, of course, for the right reasons

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

TELEVISION has its moments, and one of them was a few days ago when an unsuspecting Doris Lessing returned home from the shops to find the press assembled in front of her house, and hear that she had just won the Nobel Prize. "Oh Christ!" was her immediate reaction. She went on to grouch that she had won "all the prizes in Europe, every bloody one"—which is pretty much true, as she is 88, author of over 40 books, and still writing. Like her words, her face expressed neither gratitude nor pleasure at the award. She stomped off indoors in what seemed a sour mood.

Showing this scene on its news program, the BBC added a clip from the archive dating back to the late 1950s. Here was the young Lessing accusing the erstwhile Conservative politician R. A. Butler of endangering the planet with the nuclear weapon. Beautiful and vibrant radical woman who is still influencing us versus depressing and flabby-faced old and long-dead male reactionary whom only specialists can now identify: Viewers could have no doubt about the point the BBC was making.

This little instance of agitprop brought the past racing back like a tide. Lessing had been an ornament of the Communist party. For her and her kind, the height of chic was to demonstrate on the steps of the American embassy in central London, making sure to be photographed with the police clearly visible in the background. Along with other famous leftists, she was in the vanguard of the Ban the Bomb marches that were a fixture in the social calendar. A movement known as the Angry Young Men, the updated version of the Bright Young Things of the 1920s, grabbed headlines in the Fifties, and she was its Angry Young Woman. Celebrities of the theater like John Osborne and Ken Tynan were her peers. An American writer by the name of Clancy Sigal, a Trotskyist, shared her life. This clique's particular aura of neurotic and quarrelsome disturbance lay fog-like over the entire village of literary London.

I also remembered Lessing's short story, "The day that Stalin died," set in Bournemouth, a city with claims to define English respectability. The first-person narrator is a Communist lady who makes fools of her prim and proper relations, and has a Comrade who keeps her in line with warnings such as, "Intellectuals like you are under greater pressure from the forces of capitalist corruption than any other type of party cadre."

Lessing's novels boil down to the proposition that life choices are impossible for women. Promiscuity is necessary but never sufficient. These exercises in neurotic and quarrelsome disturbance are so labored stylistically that they are often impenetrable. Here is a sample picked at random from *The Doris Lessing Reader*, presumably an anthology of what she considers her best work:

> She frowned, and from time to time glanced up irritably at the women, indicating that their gossip made it difficult to concentrate. But then, there was nothing to prevent her moving somewhere else; and her spasms of resentment when she was asked a question, or her name was used in the family chronicling, were therefore unreasonable. As for the ladies, they sometimes allowed their eyes to rest on the girl with that glazed look which excludes a third person, or even dropped their voices; and at these moments she lifted her head to give them a glare of positive contempt; for they were seasoning the dull staple of their lives—servants, children, cooking—with a confinement or scandal of some kind; and since she was reading Havelock Ellis on sex, and had taken good care that they should know it, the dropped voices had the quality of an anomaly.

What are these spasms of resentment

Mr. Pryce-Jones is an NR senior editor. His latest novel is *Safe Houses.*

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and this glare of positive contempt? Why the condescension of writing off servants, children, and cooking as dull? A glazed look excludes a third person? How do dropped voices have the quality of anomaly, whatever that is? Besides, in all this porridge of exposition, has anything actually happened?

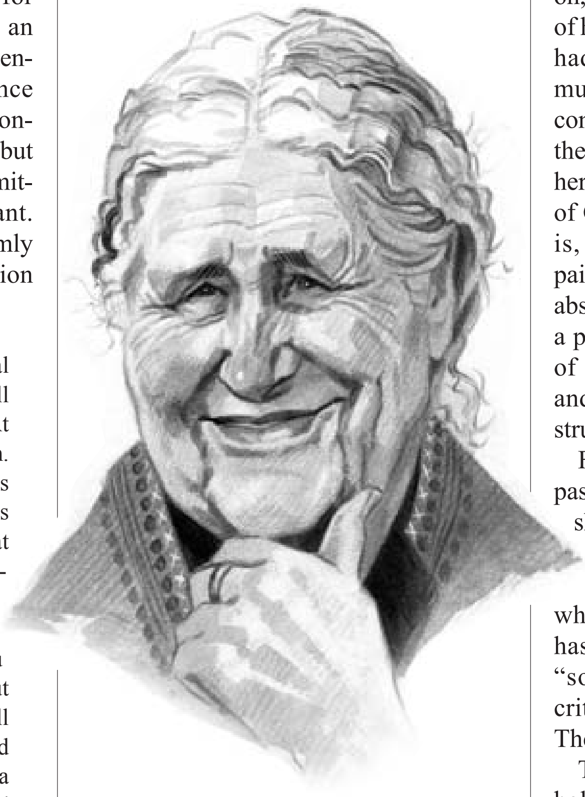
Once Communism began to fade from fashion, the Party faithful scattered in all sorts of strange directions. Lessing headed out for science fiction and Sufism, the Islamic mysticism popularized for her and many others by Idries Shah, an Afghan resident in the West (and incidentally rumored to have inspired Prince Charles's attraction to Islam). The content of her fiction changed startlingly, but the abiding resentment and the unremitting expository style remain constant. Here is another example, taken randomly from *Shikasta*, a work of science fiction also extracted in the *Reader*:

> There I sat, all dolled up, a sacrificial calf. It was a lovely meal. I adored it. All the time I was furious. Not at them. At the awfulness of this poverty. At Allah. At everything. And it was all ridiculous because Fatima and Yusuf might just as well be married already. There is that strong physical thing, and the antagonism. They quarrel as if they are married . . . Fatima cleaned things up. Then she sat with me and said, Do you like him, Rachel? Quite seriously, but laughing. I said, Yes I like him and I shall have him! . . . She laughed, but looked grave, in case there was a chance in a thousand I might mean it. And I kissed her so she should understand of course I wouldn't marry her Yusuf. All the time I was wanting to howl and weep.

Out of such material, shock brigades of professorinas in universities throughout the West are manufacturing feminist dissertations, mobilizing behind what they believe is Lessing's banner.

One unexpected day, as is the way in villages, a mutual friend—Muriel Spark—brought her to my house. These two literary women were the same age and shared the experience of having been brought up in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Though they lived not many miles apart, at the time they had not known each other. This was just as well, Muriel explained, because "I was always on the right, Doris on the left." Now they were close friends, comparing notes about the past. A changed character, Lessing was openly confessing that Communism had been an unmitigated evil, and she very much regretted the part she had played in it.

In two volumes of autobiography, *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Walking in the Shade* (1997), Lessing sincerely tried to come to terms with herself and her life, and her prose simplified accordingly, and became vivid and memorable. Her father had been badly wounded in the First War, losing a leg. Embittered but still a British patriot, on impulse he bought land in Rhodesia and emigrated to farm it. He and his wife were empire-builders at a moment when empire could no longer satisfy their dreams, and they were lost. The young Doris, so superior, turned her back on them. Communism for her, as for so many, meant wishing personal and family resentments onto the world at large.



Doris Lessing

DARREN GYGI

Communism further misled Lessing into justifying to herself her own destructive life-choices, including the abandonment of her Rhodesian first husband and two children. Another husband, Gottfried Lessing, was a hard-line Communist, a refugee from Hitler who eventually returned to East Germany, became a diplomat, and was murdered in suspect circumstances—he and his fate might have been lifted straight from an Arthur Koestler novel.

The second volume of her autobiography contains a tour de force description of a visit Lessing made in a delegation of fellow-traveling writers to the Soviet Union in Khrushchev's time. From then on, hard facts began to wring illusion out of her. Communism, she was to conclude, had been a "shameful failure." Communists were "murderers with a clear conscience." With insight deriving from the emotional wreckage she had left in her wake, she could write that, "The root of Communism—a love of revolution—is, I believe, masochism, pleasure in pain." Put another way, the passion for an absolute like Communism "is the same as a passion for unhappiness." The honesty of such self-examination throws a real and rare light on the great ideological struggle of 60 years ago.

Feminism is another absolute with a passion for unhappiness at its origin, and she has gone back on that too, distancing herself from the movement and the shock brigade of professorinas who claim her as their cheerleader. She has summarily dismissed feminists as "some of the smuggest, most unself-critical people the world has ever seen. They are horrible."

The Nobel Prize committee in Stockholm traditionally does not quite get the hang of the writers it celebrates, and they have done it again. They did not reward Lessing for her journey of self-discovery. Instead, they define her as "that epicist of the female experience who with scepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilisation to scrutiny." Never mind the virtually meaningless language, "epicist of the female experience" is an egregious putdown, one that slants and limits her work to a single perspective that fits the political correctness of the hour.

I suspect that Doris Lessing recoiled so ungraciously that morning in front of the press because she understood at once that this prize locks her away in the feminist pigeonhole, wrongfully, exclusively, and perhaps irreparably. **NR**

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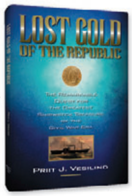

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Giuliani and the 9/11 Attacks

The attacks on him, that is

BYRON YORK

Rudy Giuliani has been leading the national polls in the Republican presidential race for months now, yet no one is entirely sure how much the voters know about him. Are they really aware of his positions on social issues? Do they know the full extent of his record in cleaning up crime and welfare in New York City? What about his views on guns? Whatever Republicans know about those issues, there's one thing all GOP voters—all voters of any stripe, for that matter—know about Giuliani: He is the hero of September 11, 2001.

At this stage in the race, Giuliani's September 11 record remains his best-known and perhaps strongest qualification to lead the Republican field. And as the possibility of his winning the Republican nomination becomes more likely, it's not surprising that Democrats are beginning to attack that record. Discredit Giuliani's 9/11 record, and you've discredited Giuliani himself.

So there is this, from the Democratic National Committee: "Poor 9/11 Decisions Raise Serious Questions about Rudy's So-Called Leadership Credentials." And this, from the head of the International Association of Firefighters: "Rudy has used the horrible events of September 11 to create a persona that is an elaborate fabrication." And this, from a former top Giuliani emergency-management official, now helping raise money for Hillary Rodham Clinton: Parts of Giuliani's 9/11 account are a "flat-out lie."

These charges could not be more serious. For the critics, the issue is not whether Giuliani has profited from 9/11, or whether he has made unseemly use of it in his campaign—although they charge him with doing both. Instead, they allege that Giuliani so mishandled events leading up to 9/11 that hundreds of people died needlessly.

They make three basic accusations. The first is that Giuliani foolishly located New York's emergency command center in the World Trade Center complex, where it was destroyed along with the Twin Towers on September 11; without that command center, the criticism goes, the city's response was disjointed, and people died as a result. The second charge is that Giuliani allowed the New York fire department to use a radio system that didn't work well in high-rise emergencies and could not communicate with police radios, and people died as a result. And the third is that Giuliani was woefully unprepared for a terrorist attack—and people died as a result.

The critics include a number of people with political motivations to attack Giuliani. But they also include some 9/11 families, heartbroken relatives who blame Giuliani for the deaths of their loved ones. Right now, their feud with the former mayor is playing out on the fringes of the presidential race. But if Giuliani continues to do well on the campaign trail, it might well move to center stage. And the questions will deserve an answer.

'THIS COLOSSAL MISTAKE'?

Perhaps the most serious and oft-repeated charge against Giuliani concerns his decision to place the city's emergency command center within the World Trade Center. "He made this colossal mistake of locating the command center in the only complex that had already been attacked by Islamic fundamentalists and that they vowed to return to," says Wayne Barrett, a writer with *The Village Voice* who has been a persistent critic of Giuliani for more than a decade and whose book, *Grand Illusion: The Untold Story of Rudy Giuliani and 9/11*, has become a guide for those who question Giuliani's performance that day. To evaluate the validity of his critique, you have to go back a few years.

Before Rudy Giuliani, New York City had no emergency command center. For that matter, it had no centralized office of emergency management, or OEM. Giuliani created both in 1996 for the purpose of dealing with all varieties of catastrophe: snowstorms, floods, fires, chemical-weapon attacks, explosions, hurricanes, epidemics—you name it. But New York is a big place, and with the new center came a new question: Where would it be located?

A long search came down to two possibilities: a city facility in Brooklyn known as Metro Tech, or some location—there were a number of candidates—in Lower Manhattan. In February 1996, Jerome Hauer, Giuliani's head of OEM, wrote a memo discussing the pros and cons of going to Brooklyn. Space could be made available quickly, he wrote; Metro Tech was "secure and not as visible a target as buildings in lower Manhattan"; it had backup phone, power, and water service. On the other hand, Hauer said, it would take some time for the mayor to travel to Metro Tech in the event of an emergency; it might be difficult to get to in case of a blizzard or some other disruptive incident; and the building was deemed vulnerable to truck-bomb attack. “Metro Tech has as many pros as cons,” Hauer concluded.

The deciding factor, Hauer later said, was that Giuliani wanted a location within walking distance from City Hall, and that meant Lower Manhattan. This stipulation created some requirements of its own; an underground location, for example, would be out of the question because the area is low-lying and might flood. After much discussion, the search focused on 7 World Trade Center, in the Twin Towers complex. It had good security—the Secret Service and CIA already had facilities there—and could be significantly upgraded. A large office on the 23rd floor was selected. It was made virtually hurricane-proof and energy self-sufficient, and was packed with the latest technology. The center opened in June 1999.

But it wasn’t available to Giuliani or anyone else on the morning of September 11, because once the planes hit, 7 World Trade Center became too dangerous to occupy. The towers’ fall inflicted fatal damage on the building, which itself collapsed in the late afternoon. With no command center to work from, Giuliani and his aides were forced to set out on foot, establishing a temporary center in a police building.

In the years since, Giuliani has faced the questions: Whose idea was it to put the command center at 7 World Trade Center? And would a working command center have been an essential part of the city’s response during those 102 minutes between the first plane’s impact and the second tower’s collapse—the only time available to save lives?

“This was Jerry’s [Jerome Hauer’s] choice,” Anthony Carbonetti, Giuliani’s right-hand man for years, told me recently when I asked about the decision to go with 7 World Trade Center. “There is no doubt in my mind.” Last May, Giuliani himself was asked about the center during an interview on *Fox News Sunday*, and he was just as emphatic. “My director of emergency management [Hauer] recommended 7 World Trade Center.”

“I have no idea what he’s talking about,” Hauer said recently of Giuliani. (Hauer did not respond to requests for an interview; the quote comes from his appearance in a video attacking Giuliani.) “Because we had already had a bombing in Lower Manhattan, and because I felt that Lower Manhattan would remain a target, [I felt] that the best location would be out in Brooklyn.” Giuliani’s contention that he acted solely on Hauer’s recommendation, Hauer said, “is just a flat-out lie.”

But Hauer told a different story as recently as three years ago. Appearing on WCBS in May 2004, he said 7 World Trade Center was an excellent location for the command center: “The bottom line is that building was one of the safest buildings we could find.”

“Did you personally favor putting OEM where it was situated?” Hauer was asked.

“Absolutely,” he answered.

Whoever’s idea it was, the larger question is whether having a

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fully operational command center on September 11 would have made a difference in the city’s response during those 102 minutes. It certainly wouldn’t have hurt. But “the location [of the main command center] was irrelevant,” says Sam Caspersen, who served as counsel for the September 11 Commission, “because this was not going to be a command center that was going to coordinate the immediate actions of the fire department and the police department.” Instead, Caspersen told me recently, the action was at on-site command centers set up by the fire and police departments. There is no way fire chiefs would have chosen to direct the action from a remote location; that’s just not the way they did things. Their decision to set up a command at the site ended disastrously when the North Tower collapsed on top of it. But they had no idea the buildings would fall down. Neither did the officials who chose 7 World Trade Center.

So was anyone wrong in all of this? In retrospect, it seems clear that the command center’s location was the consensus choice of a number of top officials, Hauer and Giuliani included, who could not foresee what would happen on September 11. It was a reasonable decision given the available information.

‘121 GUYS DIDN’T HEAR THE CALL’

The second major criticism of Giuliani is that fire-department radios did not function well, or did not function at all, inside the World Trade Center on 9/11, and that police and fire radios could not communicate with one another. The International Association of Firefighters has produced a video, *Rudy Giuliani: Urban Legend*, that blames Giuliani for the deaths of 121 firefighters who did not escape the North Tower after an evacuation order was given. The video features an interview with Jim Riches, FDNY deputy chief, whose son—one of four, all firefighters—died on September 11. “That day, my son was working,” Riches says. “And they didn’t hear the call, 121 guys didn’t hear the call in the North Tower to get out. The police officers heard it because their radios worked and ours didn’t. . . . My son is dead because of it. . . . I blame Giuliani.”

We do not know, and will never know, what the dead firefighters did or did not hear. It seems reasonable to assume that better-functioning radios might have saved some of their lives. But the question of Giuliani’s role in the matter is something else entirely.

When communications problems hobbled rescue efforts after the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, which had jurisdiction over the property, installed what are known as repeaters—devices that would amplify the signals of fire radios and make it more likely that those signals would reach firefighters inside the Twin Towers. According to the September 11 Commission report, the Port Authority had wanted to keep the repeaters turned on at all times, but the fire department protested, saying that this might interfere with other FDNY radio traffic. The fire department prevailed—and in 2000 prevailed again, when it gained full control of the activation console for the repeaters.

According to the 9/11 Commission, turning the repeaters on was

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a two-step operation. “One button on the repeater system activation console in the North Tower was pressed at 8:54, though it is unclear by whom,” the report states. That meant that FDNY portable radios could communicate with each other and that the master radio at the fire desk in the tower could hear the portable radios. But the report continues: “The activation of *transmission* on the master handset required . . . that a second button be pressed. That second button was never activated on the morning of September 11.”

No one knows why it wasn’t. In addition, it’s not known whether the repeater system itself was damaged by the planes’ impact. Whatever the reason, communications broke down. “The reality is, the repeaters didn’t work,” Joseph Lhota, a top Giuliani aide at the time, told me. “Had they worked, firefighters would have heard the evacuation order.” But no one, even after the 1993 attack, had planned for the circumstances of 9/11. Hauer made this point to the 9/11 Commission in May 2004: “We . . . had not planned for the chaos that follows the loss of command structure of the fire department and hundreds of members of the police department and fire department. No one had ever conceived of this as an issue that we would face.”

As for the question of fire and police radios that could not talk to each other, the Giuliani administration introduced a new radio system in 2000 that was supposed to improve the situation. But it was quickly withdrawn amidst charges of poor training, poor performance, and bad planning. One could argue that Giuliani failed to fix the problem, but his task was made difficult by years of police and fire-department infighting. Even today, long after September 11 and long after Giuliani’s departure, the problem has not been solved.

‘THE MOST PREPARED CITY’

The final charge against Giuliani is that he was simply unprepared to face a terrorist attack and had not seriously considered the issue before September 11. “Giuliani’s terrorism biography is bunk,” wrote Wayne Barrett in *The Village Voice*. “As mayor, his laser-beam focus was street thugs, and as a prosecutor, it was the mob, Wall Street, and crooked politicians.”

While it is true that Giuliani focused on fighting crime in New York—it’s the biggest reason the majority-Democratic city elected and then reelected him—a look at the record suggests that he also had serious concerns about terrorism. He and his staff expected an attack. They prepared for an attack. It just wasn’t the type of attack that actually came.

“The largest concern of the Giuliani administration, as far as a major attack was concerned, was a chemical or biological incident,” says Sam Caspersen, the former 9/11 Commission counsel. “Ironically, on the morning of September 11, OEM was busy planning a chem/bio exercise.” By all accounts, Giuliani and his top aides had been rattled by the 1995 poison-gas attack in the Tokyo subway and were quite worried about a similar event in New York. It was one of the reasons they selected the 23rd floor of 7 World Trade Center for the command post. “We looked at chemical and

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biological attacks," Jerome Hauer explained in 2004. "Most of these agents fall after they are released, and we didn't want to be underground." After the command post was opened, it was the site of a number of drills for a chemical or biological attack.

Joe Lhota, the former Giuliani aide, adds, "We were equally as worried about car bombs." And indeed, the Giuliani team did worry a lot about car bombs—attacks that would affect a much smaller area than a chemical or biological attack, and likely cause fewer casualties, but would spread terror throughout the city. They also worried about and prepared for plane crashes, whatever their cause. But not for a plane—or two—crashing into the World Trade Center.

With all that work, they thought they were prepared. "I believe that New York was the most prepared city in the United States," Hauer told the September 11 Commission. "We worked for four years to build an emergency-response system that could manage almost any crisis." But in the end, despite all their planning, they were surprised.

Leading on 9/12

ROBERT BUKATY/AFP

THE QUESTIONS HE'LL ANSWER

Giuliani's critics direct other charges against him, too. They say that he underestimated the environmental dangers facing clean-up workers at Ground Zero, which *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins recently called "his worst failure." (Collins's husband, Dan Collins, is the co-author of Wayne Barrett's *Grand Illusion*.) As a result, some people who helped in the recovery effort now suffer from respiratory problems.

"We were well aware of the environmental concerns," John Odermatt, who was a top official at OEM, told me. According to a September 14, 2001, report in the *Times*, officials said they had thousands of masks available for workers at Ground Zero. Odermatt continues: "After a certain period of time, you could not get in unless you had personal protective equipment." But in the critical first few days of rescue efforts, neither city nor federal authorities *forced* workers to wear masks, and Giuliani himself sometimes didn't wear one when he visited the site. In retrospect, they should have. But given the other concerns at the time—in those hours, people were still desperately hoping that survivors might be found—protective masks were not at the top of the priority list.

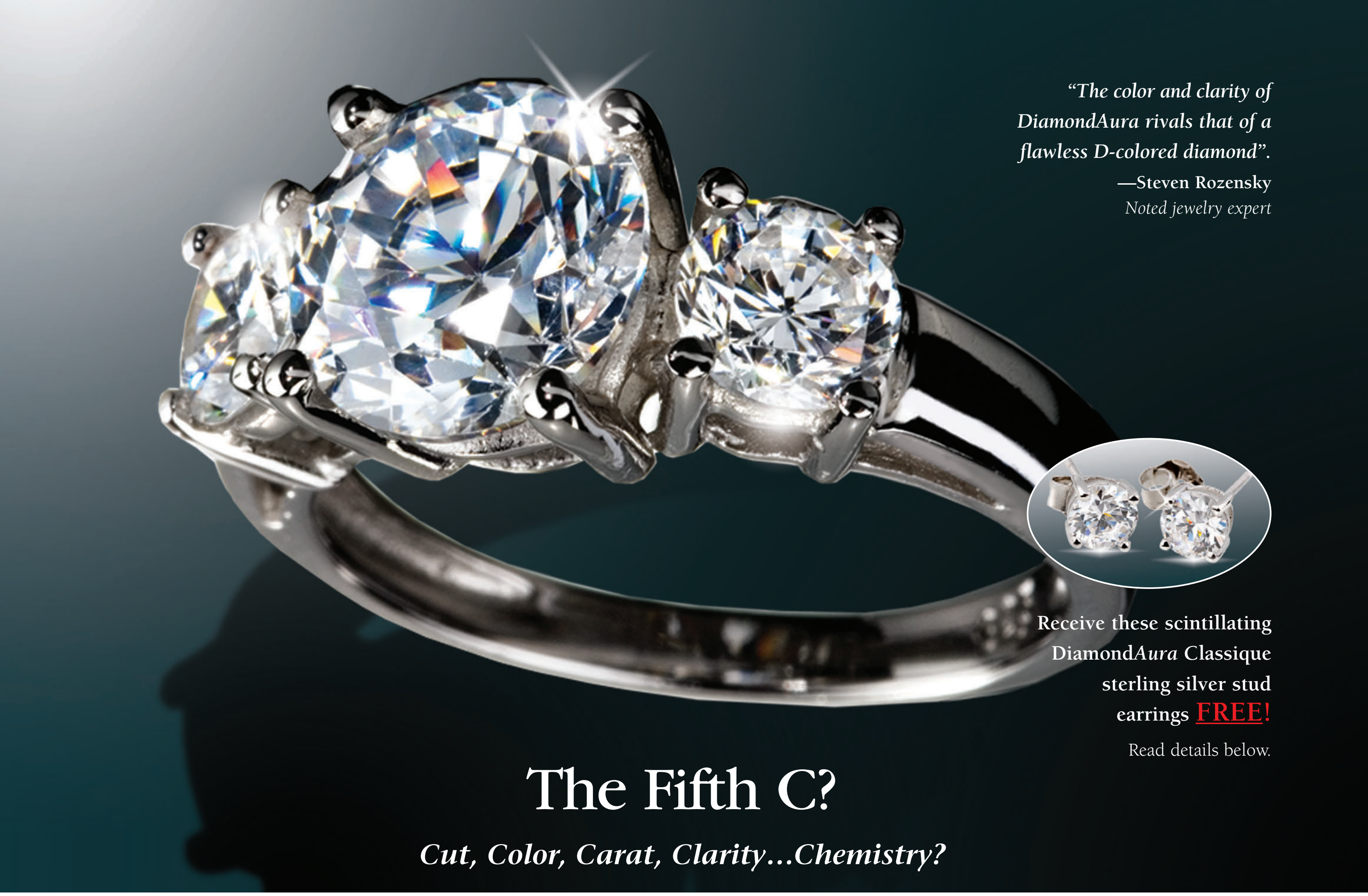
In the end, the most penetrating questions about Giuliani's performance still concern his preparation and performance in the years leading up to 10:28 on the morning of September 11, when the North Tower fell and virtually no more lives could be saved. And on those questions, he has a solid defense.

Beyond the specifics of the command center, the radios, and the preparation for attack, he can point out, as Anthony Carbonetti does, that many, many people didn't die that day. "The fire department and the police department saved thousands of lives by clearing the buildings," Carbonetti says. "Tens of thousands of people not only worked in both of those buildings every day but commuted underneath. They did a phenomenal job of minimizing the number of casualties, and that you have to give them a great deal of credit for."

In addition, even some of Giuliani's critics concede that he did a masterful job after the attacks of leading the city through its worst crisis. It's not well-known, but on the morning of September 12 Giuliani consulted a psychologist, looking for advice on how to communicate with a concerned public. After that meeting, Giuliani held a press conference, and the psychologist, Michael Cohen, was impressed by Giuliani's cool and quick mind. "Many people said to me, 'This is something any mayor would do,'" Cohen told me recently. "My answer was absolutely not. Some people become deer in the headlights. They overreact, they underreact. He had a totally accurate and reality-based take on what had happened. It was a totally tragic event, but it also wasn't the end of the world, and the city was going to recover. The end of the story was always our strength." That was the message Giuliani got through to New Yorkers and the world, and that is why he was so widely praised.

Now Giuliani finds critics, mostly on the left, trying to knock down this accomplishment. His response has been, in general, not to respond. After weeks of requests from NATIONAL REVIEW for an interview for this story, he declined. Even though he has made speeches about September 11 for years, and it is a big part of his 2002 book, *Leadership*, he apparently doesn't want to be seen answering detailed questions about radios, or 7 World Trade Center, or Wayne Barrett's latest accusation.

But if Giuliani continues to lead the Republican race, at some point the questions, legitimate or not, will come up, and he'll have to answer them. He can rightly charge some of his critics with political motives—Jerome Hauer, for example, recently served as a co-chairman of a $1,000-a-head fundraising event for Hillary Clinton—but that won't change the questions themselves. He's got a good case to make. He might as well start making it. **NR**



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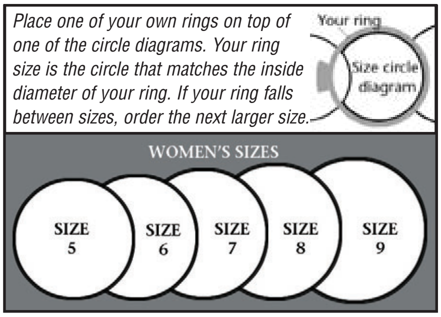

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■ AT WAR II

Getting the Job Done

A report from Iraq

RICHARD LOWRY

Ramadi, Iraq

It's a chance encounter that would have been impossible a year ago. A visiting American colonel is walking out of the once-embattled government-center building here, home to U.S. forces and the Anbar provincial council. A key Sunni sheikh is walking in.

The stoutly built American is dressed in the army's digital camouflage uniform, with a sidearm and the look of someone who has seen his share of combat in this war. The sheik is resplendent in a gossamer white robe, accessorized with gold fringe and tassels. He has a mustache and wears sunglasses, with the look of someone who knows his way around the western Iraqi desert. The odd couple shake hands underneath the sun-drenched sky and the sheikh won't let go.

The sheikh is an uncle of Sheikh Sattar, a pioneer in the tribal resistance to al-Qaeda who was assassinated shortly after he met President Bush here. The revolt—known as the "Awakening"—is the reason that a few minutes earlier we were standing on the roof of the government center without helmets or body armor, surrounded by Iraqi contractors hammering and drilling beneath us, refurbishing the compound. Not long ago, we would have been sniped at. "Could you have done this a year ago?" a journalist asks the officers escorting us. "We couldn't have done this *six weeks* ago," an officer laughs.

The colonel expresses his condolences to the sheikh through an interpreter, and—their hands still clasped—the sheikh explains that, four years ago, "I had to leave to go someplace else," and he only "came back to Anbar three months ago." Another American officer mentions Capt. Travis Patriquin, who had helped lead the way in reaching out to the Anbar tribes and was killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) last year. "We've both lost," the sheik says. "For the first year and a half, you were welcomed here. Then, all these people started coming in and made things worse. People came trying to break trust. We lost over 18 of our sheikhs."

The "people" he refers to are the foreign fighters of al-Qaeda. As history, this is laughably dishonest, ignoring the fact that most of the sheikhs of Anbar were happy to assist al-Qaeda in killing Americans for roughly the first three years of the war. But it's the thought that counts, and the Americans aren't about to contradict him. The colonel says of the violence, "We won't let it happen again—together." Then he repeats an Arab saying: "You can't hear the sound of one hand clapping." The colonel lets go of the sheikh's hand and begins clapping his hands—together.

This isn't the only episode here that once would have been hard to fathom. Later, we meet an Iraqi who runs a crossing on the Syrian border. Trim in his blue uniform, he's charming and voluble, flashing an infectious gap-toothed smile. Sitting next to a Marine lieutenant colonel he works with closely, he constantly slaps the officer's back, as if he's Trent Lott working one of his colleagues on the Senate floor. When the lieutenant colonel says something about missing his wife back home, the Iraqi says brightly—"I have two!"

After the bonhomie-filled meeting breaks up, an American notes that the Iraqi has a three-dot tattoo on his hand that identifies him as one of Saddam's fedayeen. He ran a customs house for Saddam in Basra, and left in 2003 when his life was threatened. He was at least complicit in the repression of Shiites while in Basra, and probably was shooting at us—or helping people who were—after that. We killed his son in Fallujah.

When did he stop resisting us? "When he knew it was a lost cause," the lieutenant colonel says. This Iraqi is nothing if not a survivor. He does basically the same job for the Americans and the Shiite-dominated government as he did for Saddam, reaping the benefits. He wears what appears to be a $15,000 Cartier watch. "He's the richest man in his town," the lieutenant colonel explains. "They've broken corruption down to a science. But corruption aside, which we'll never stop, he's an effective leader. We're looking for someone relatively effective. And easy to work with."

WARS WITHIN WARS

These days a former member of Saddam's fedayeen fills the bill. Wherever there's a Sunni in Iraq, it seems we've made extraordinary progress in the war. This has allowed us to forge ahead on two major fronts, against al-Qaeda and the Sunni insurgency. They haven't been vanquished, but both are on the defensive and have suffered strategic blows. Al-Qaeda has lost the population in many areas and the Sunni insurgency has splintered. If this were all there were to the war, we'd be on the cusp of success.

But the Iraq War has wars within wars. One Army intelligence officer identifies six different ones: the Sunni vs. Shiite conflict; the fight against al-Qaeda; the Shiite vs. Shiite struggle; the challenge of crime; Iran's effort to destabilize the country; and the Sunni insurgency. Each of those has its own layers. Moqtada al-Sadr's Shiite militia, the Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM), is one faction in the intra-Shiite struggle, and we have used rival factions to knock off one another in Baghdad. Every area has its own dynamic and its own players, whom our military has to know and manage. As one top officer told me a few months ago, "We can succeed—it will just be the toughest thing we've ever done."

Turning the Sunnis around is a big step toward success, but the complicating factor, of course, is their relations with the Shiites. Nearly every American in Iraq agrees that the progress with the Sunnis is tenuous unless the Shiite government reaches out. An officer about to go out on patrol in northwest Baghdad puts it colorfully in a rhetorical question aimed at the Iraqi government, analogizing the Sunni insurgents to America's famous rebels: "What do you do when Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson offer to put down their arms?"

That his question can even be asked is a testament to our counterinsurgency tactics, with their emphasis on securing the population. Violence and insecurity empower extremists on all sides. "The issue is the fear of the population," says an officer based in Baqubah, north of Baghdad. "If they don't feel secure, they'll call al-Qaeda as backup, they'll call JAM as backup." Critics of the war say we have to go back to our bases and stop policing the civil war, so we can instead focus on counterterrorism. That advice runs exactly counter to the experience here.

Northwest Baghdad is an example. We depart for a morning ride through it from Baghdad's Camp Victory in a few up-armored Humvees. Standing in the staging area surrounded by armored vehicles, Col. J. B. Burton, a tall, tough-talking Tennessean, tells his men that a couple of dozen guys in an extremist cell were rolled up the night before, so today there might be "pissed-off people looking for revenge." He leads his men in a prayer with their hands all extended outward one on top of another, like a sports team before a game: a prayer that ends, "Let our reflexes be better than the other dumb bastards'."

Almost immediately out of the base as we turn onto a dusty back road, delighted little boys begin running directly toward our convoy. The soldier in the front passenger seat mutters, "Get out of the road, you idiots," and lays on the horn, which makes the siren and honking sound of an emergency-response vehicle. Soon, we are out on a well-traveled highway, the main road from Fallujah through the Abu Ghraib area into western Baghdad and right up to the Green Zone.

It used to be that al-Qaeda fighters would drive down this road and exit into the surrounding Sunni neighborhoods, where they would embed themselves and plan and stage spectacular attacks on Baghdad proper. Every night, Colonel Burton had his men place tall concrete barriers on the side of the road to cut off access to the neighborhoods. There are 17 and a half miles of concrete. Everyone traveling down the road is funneled through a system of checkpoints. We have managed to "disrupt the freedom of movement of al-Qaeda," Burton says, and create a "safe haven for the population."

We head into one of the neighborhoods, Ghazaliya, and stop at an intersection on one of the main roads, which looks like it once was a nice thoroughfare with an ample median strip. The houses are big. This had been a middle-class area with lots of retirees from the army, but became the focus of what Colonel Burton calls a "no-kidding sectarian war." The road was the fault line between al-Sadr's JAM, which terrorized the Sunnis from one direction, and al-Qaeda, which infiltrated from the other. The groups fed off each other. "If a vehicle bomb goes off," Colonel Burton explains. "JAM says, 'You need us to protect you.'"

We established a joint security station in the area, and pushed back against JAM. Sectarian murders dropped by half, according to Burton. Stopping the JAM expansion relieved pressure on the Sunnis, who rejected al-Qaeda and began to volunteer to police their own neighborhood. They are the "Ghazaliya Guards," and they man a checkpoint controlling movement in and out of the neighborhood. They don't look like much. One American soldier jokes that their plain tan uniforms could be out of a JCPenney catalogue.

But they have been a game-changer. "These were the guys who

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were firing at checkpoints," says one officer. "Then we started paying them, and they stopped firing at them." And began manning them instead. Colonel Burton explains, "There are no Iraqi police in this area at all. The volunteers are helping us to fill that security gap." They are, in some ways, ideally suited to fill it. "Once these guys take root," Burton says, "they plug into the human-intelligence network." They can finger bad guys, and in a more secure environment, the locals feel safe in giving us tips. Significant actions against Americans have dropped in the area.

Colonel Burton points out a vacant lot that had been piled high with trash and was a dumping ground for dead bodies. Now, it is empty, but for a green pool of raw sewage. The neighborhood is still trashed, with garbage strewn everywhere and occasionally smoldering in small piles. But people are walking around, and ramshackle shops in garage-style open bays are open for business. In June, no one would have been on the street. Burton notes that the women are wearing color again, a sign that they are no longer afraid of the fundamentalists.

The rise of this kind of Sunni security volunteer around the country means we are no longer fighting as many "former regime elements." These former Baathists now tend to be referred to as "the honorable resistance." One of Burton's officers says of members of Saddam's army, "In some ways they did their duty. No one is going to default to another civilization. No man of honor is going to give up his commission and cooperate with an invading force." That they are now indeed cooperating with us has transformed the war.

A HELPFUL FATIGUE

Why the change? One reason is a kind of strategic weariness. As an American intelligence official based in Baghdad puts it, the Sunnis grew tired of fighting four enemies: al-Qaeda, the U.S., the Shiite militias, and the government. "The Baathists wanted us out, but didn't want civil war," he explains. "They wanted to wear us out and undermine the legitimacy of the government. The Samarra bombing unhinged that strategy." The Sunnis faced a full-on sectarian war.

The other reason is the sheer repulsiveness of al-Qaeda. When al-Qaeda moves into a neighborhood, it takes what it wants. It shutters shops it doesn't like, including barber shops and stores selling videos. It sets up a cleric and an enforcing committee to impose its version of Islamic law. It abuses the local women. "It's not rape, pillage, and burn," says an intelligence official. "It's, 'I like her, she has to marry me.' It's a form of rape. It's indentured, imposed sexual slavery." (He says al-Qaeda fighters invariably have an "overwhelming amount of smut" on their hard drives.)

This repression hasn't worn well with the Sunnis. Nor have al-Qaeda's economic depredations. As we have pressured al-Qaeda and killed or captured its financiers, it has become more desperate for funds and had to resort to more desperate tactics. Col. Michael Kershaw, a big cheerful Texan, tells of an incident in his area south of Baghdad. Al-Qaeda fighters seized a truck and its driver and his son, and offered to give them back to the tribe for 100 million dinars. They got only half the ransom, and killed the father and the son. According to Kershaw, the tribal leader tied one of the men who did it to an IED in retribution.

The Sunnis grew tired of being in al-Qaeda's line of fire. General Petraeus tells the story of the leader of the Amariya volunteers in west Baghdad. He had four brothers killed in the violence, and a IED blew up his house. He knew that al-Qaeda had placed a roadside bomb in front of his house, according to Petraeus. He was fine with the bomb—but not in that location. "He said," Petraeus recounts, "'Can you move that down the street, please?' And they didn't do it, torched it off, and it blew up his house."

When al-Qaeda controls an area, it becomes a base for its power projection like an "aircraft carrier," says an officer charged with tracking al-Qaeda. It levies taxes to help finance its operations, and establishes a ring of defensive IEDs (one stretch of road in Baqubah had 120 of them). It sets up vehicle-borne bomb factories and imports suicide bombers for its offensive operations. Al-Qaeda needs this kind of mini-base. "Without sanctuaries," says the officer, "al-Qaeda can't operate."

> The tribes weren't going to stand for al-Qaeda fighters showing up and saying they were going to take a wife for two weeks, while launching attacks into Baghdad.

Securing Baghdad has meant taking away al-Qaeda's sanctuaries in the "belts" surrounding the city that have been staging areas for attacks. One of them is to the south, in Colonel Kershaw's area, the so-called "triangle of death." It is largely rural and Sunni, farmland dissected by canals and a network of small roadways. In the west, it borders Anbar Province. The Medina Republican Guard Division was stationed there, and provided the manpower and know-how for the insurgency, rallying around al-Qaeda.

Kershaw's troops moved out into the population. As his operations officer puts it, "If you want to influence something, you have to be there." As Kershaw's forces pushed out against al-Qaeda, there was intense resistance. Kershaw's brigade went from an average of less than one killed in action every 14 days in the September–December 2006 period, to an average of three per 14 days from January to May of this year.

Things started to break when Marines abutting the area to the west requested a meeting because a neighborhood-watch group in their area wanted to extend into Kershaw's. That was the beginning of a wave of security volunteers from the various tribes sweeping from the northwest of the area to the southeast. Every tribe insists it was the first to make the move, or right after the first. "There's no third place in Iraq," jokes Kershaw.

The volunteers were—as has usually been the case around the country—pretty impressive. Kershaw's officers recall them showing up with a "cartoon sketch—'here's my plan.'" The Americans

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Professor Anthony A. Goodman is is Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Montana State University and Affiliate Professor in the Department of Biological Structure at the University of Washington School of Medicine. He received his B.A. from Harvard College and his M.D. from Cornell Medical College.

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thought, "Wow, we never saw the Iraqi *army* do this." In Kershaw's area, volunteers wear blaze orange vests, as if they are crossing guards or about to go upland bird hunting. They are paid $10 a day to guard their areas, two-thirds of what an official Iraqi policeman makes.

But more than the money, it's a big deal for the volunteers, many of them former military, simply to be carrying a weapon and securing their own territory. "They'll say to us," an officer says, "'We don't want your money, we want our pride.'"

As dislocating as the changes that came with the U.S. invasion were—the establishment of Shiite power and the dissolution of the army—al-Qaeda ended up representing even more radical change. The operations officer says, "Al-Qaeda supplanted the tribal system. It supplanted a system that had lasted centuries." The tribes weren't going to stand for al-Qaeda fighters showing up and saying they were going to take a wife for two weeks, while launching attacks into Baghdad.

There are 137 tribes and sub-tribes in the area. The operations officer calls it "an archipelago of complex societal islands." Governance and everything else relates back to the tribes, and "each island sees the world differently." "If I said I understood it," he admits, "I'd be lying. I'm not sure the Iraqis understand it." Slowly, however, the Americans have developed relationships, and the Sunni turn has greatly aided this process. The volunteers submit to fingerprinting, retinal scans, and photographing. "They've lost their anonymity," Kershaw says, "one of their greatest weapons against us."

A full 16,000 have been enrolled as guards, with 8,800 of those under contract getting paid. The Americas have ginned up 10,000 applicants for the Iraqi police, and close to 6,000 have passed the initial requirements. The "triangle of death," as a consequence, has become something of a misnomer. Kershaw's brigade's last killed-in-action was in July.

This kind of change around Baghdad—coupled with the surge in the city—means that, in the words of an intelligence official, "Baghdad is increasingly secure and more tolerable for its citizens." In March, there were 45 vehicle-borne bombs in the city. In September, there were 16, most of them at checkpoints because they couldn't get any farther. Since early June around the country there has been a consistent drop in total IEDs. They are at their lowest since February 2006, down from roughly 3,000 a month to 2,000. We are losing the lowest number of soldiers to IEDs in 14 months. "The terrorists did their best to mount an offensive for Ramadan, but despite all the intent, they were unable to achieve the results desired," says the official.

MOVING ON FROM HERE

So what will the government do with Lee and Jackson? The political issue that concerns top officers most isn't the oil law or any of the other "benchmarks," but whether the Iraqi government will enroll the Sunni security volunteers as policemen on the official payroll. "We're so close in terms of the possibility of achieving a reasonable outcome here," says an officer in Baghdad who tracks reconciliation, "but it is being stymied by the inability and, somewhat, recalcitrance of the government."

The Iraqi government is a nightmare of red tape in the best of circumstances. But the government appears to be slow-walking the integration of the volunteers into the security forces. One American colonel's PowerPoint slide of what it takes for a Sunni volunteer to become a policeman looks like Arlen Specter's diagram of Hillary Clinton's health-care plan in 1994. Officers fear that when we hand our makeshift security contracts with the Sunni volunteers over to the Iraqi government, as planned, the government will let them dry up. Which would be a disaster. American officials are confident that al-Qaeda is never coming back in a dominant form again, but the Sunnis could return to civil war. "At some point in time," says the officer following reconciliation, "Sunni community leaders will say, 'I've tried to play ball and it hasn't gotten me anything and I'm not engaged in armed resistance. *Why?*'"

Some of the government's hesitation is understandable. The Sunni volunteers are people who recently were, in the best case, passively assenting to violence against the Shiites and, in the worst, actively participating in it. But the fear is deep-rooted. The Shiites have long memories of oppression. On top of this, Prime Minister Maliki is from the Dawa party, a former underground revolutionary party prone to a conspiratorial cast of mind. The Iranians are surely playing on his paranoia by whispering in his ear that the Americans are about to betray him by backing the Sunnis.

The country's problems go much deeper than any one government, of course: a violent political culture, a society devastated by Saddam's rule and a decade of sanctions, a constitutional structure with an extremely weak executive, and the effects of the insurgency and sectarian war that have sent hundreds of thousands of Iraq's most talented people out of the country. (Not to mention Iran, which will try to wreck whatever stability we create.) Colonel Burton captured it with a flinty observation while surveying his handiwork in Ghazaliya from a nearby highway overpass: "If you hire kids and tie those jobs to education programs, you'll have a thriving society . . . in 15 frickin' years."

How the current crisis turns out, no one knows. It may be that the government is rotten to the core, and has to give way to some kind of extra-constitutional emergency government. Or perhaps change can continue to take hold on the ground so that the government in Baghdad feels pressured to react positively. This is the muddle-through scenario. We are essential to it, performing our role of holding the security situation together, brokering reconciliation, and pressuring the government (it is dependent on us for the most basic things—without chlorine from us, for instance, it wouldn't be able to run its water plants). It's hard to see how we get from here to there, but in January, making the kind of security gains we have while putting time back on the proverbial Washington clock looked nearly impossible too. It happened.

To sit in on briefings with American colonels about their areas of operation is to get a window on an incredibly complicated world. They have to run local governments, train Iraqi forces, manage relations with Baghdad, revitalize local economies, and engage in graduate-level anthropology—all while fighting a war. These must be the most competent people on Earth. You are awestruck by how much they have been able to accomplish, at the same time you want to hold your head in your hands at the magnitude and complexity of the tasks they still have ahead of them.

One of Kershaw's officers explains counterinsurgency and winning the trust of a local population in a metaphor that, however apt, elicits guffaws from his comrades: "It's like Pilates—it's all about time spent under pressure." What our troops most need from us is something within our power to grant—more time. **NR**

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How Do You Keep Them Down on the Farm . . .

. . . if all they make is a lousy few mil?

STEPHEN SPRUIELL

Fort Dodge, Iowa

WHEN you're a reporter asking Iowans about ethanol, they tend to ask back, "First of all, where are you from?" If you reply that you're from New York, they chuckle and nod. After I told one Iowan in the ethanol business that I spent most of my pre-Yankee life in Texas and Oklahoma, he said to me, "Okay, so at least you know that corn comes out of the ground and not off a supermarket shelf." This sums up how Iowans feel about New Yorkers and agriculture: Our knowledge begins and ends with Whole Foods.

But as I drive through Iowa and get a close-up view of corn production, I am reminded of the industrial landscapes of the Northeast. Here, nature is carved up into an endless grid. Towering above the farm plots are hulking metal giants—silos, grain elevators, industrial tractors. It's not so different from driving up the New Jersey Turnpike.

Government support for ethanol, a fuel additive made from fermented corn, has added another industrial feature to Iowa's increasingly mechanized countryside: the ethanol distillery. Ethanol promotion is just the latest chapter in a saga of government interference in the agricultural marketplace that began seven decades ago. Since the 1930s, farm subsidies have rewarded the heedless overproduction of just a few crops, yielded unmanageable surpluses year after year, and taken a heavy toll on the land. A tiny percentage of America's farm families now produce almost all of the country's agricultural output. The more these farmers produce, the more subsidies they receive. For this reason, they frequently spend their government payments on more land, more seed, and more equipment, churning out more food than they can profitably sell. Lawmakers, rather than solve this problem by reducing subsidies, have resorted to the alchemy of ethanol.

Their goal is to take a pile of corn that nobody wants and turn it into a source of revenue for American farmers. In states such as Iowa, that has had the effect of putting everything bad about farm subsidies on steroids: the gross inefficiencies, the environmental degradation, and, of course, the redistribution of billions of tax dollars to farm families whose incomes are well above the national average. By mandating the consumption of 7.5 billion gallons of ethanol per year by 2012, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 sent ethanol makers scrambling to increase production, which in turn sent corn prices—and consumers' grocery bills—soaring.

Goodwill toward farmers is one of the strongest forces perpetuating farm subsidies. Farmers descend from pioneers and represent important aspects of American culture and history. This perception is especially important to politicians; as long as it persists, they believe they can associate themselves with moral uprightness by voting for farm programs. They sell these programs to skeptical voters as a "safety net" for small, struggling farmers down on their luck. For many years, the public did not understand farm programs well enough to know that the benefits go primarily to large farming operations. But rising food costs, combined with reports of commercial farmers' netting record-breaking profits, are finally starting to change that.

COUNTRY CLUBBERS IN DIKE

Dennis Kruger operates an enormous farm in Iowa that produces corn and soybeans. Last year, Kruger Farms did $4.7 million worth of business and reported a net worth of $10.3 million. Kruger is also the president of Kruger Seed, a company he recently sold to the agribusiness giant Monsanto. In the 1990s, his family developed the Fox Ridge Country Club in Dike, Iowa, the city in which they live. They sold the golf course, but they still own the surrounding housing development and maintain an elegant residence overlooking one of the wide fairways. (It's a beautiful course, albeit the only one I've ever seen with a farm tractor sitting on the driving range.)

Considering Kruger's apparent financial health, one might be surprised to learn that he is among the top recipients of government aid in Iowa, according to the Environmental Working Group's farm-subsidy database. Between 1995 and 2005, he received $3.6 million in federal aid, including $730,000 in 2005 alone. Earlier this year, after the Bush administration proposed limiting the amount of subsidies a farmer could receive, Kruger complained to the *Omaha World-Herald* that such a limitation would hurt his ability to support his family and his seven fulltime employees, and argued that large farms shouldn't be penalized just for being large.

After visiting Dike, I drive north to check up on another recipient of federal aid. In Britt, I find a sea of bleachers overlooking a wide dirt oval and a vast expanse of corn. A sign hanging on a gate informs me that another season of racing events at the Hancock County Speedway ended just days ago, and that the Doug Studer Farms "Night of a Thousand Stars" was one of the season's last races. I later learn that, in addition to sponsoring races at the speedway, Studer Farms sponsors the Alan Mondus Racing team from Lakeville, Minn. According to the press release announcing his Mondus sponsorship, Studer is "a long time supporter . . . of racing."

So, I suppose, are American taxpayers; Studer Farms has received around $2.1 million in farm subsidies since 2000. It's not clear how much of that has gone to local racing events in Britt, but the exact number isn't important. The point is that the government is providing income support to people who can afford to build country clubs and sponsor racing teams.

The Studers and the Krugers are also cashing in on the spike in corn prices created by the 2005 ethanol mandate. They are among the 8 percent of family farming operations whose size makes them "commercial farms" according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This small subclass reaps most of the benefits when the government subsidizes agriculture—as opposed to the 92 percent of farm-dwellers who derive either all or most of their income from sources other than farming or subsidies.

These smaller farmers are expected to see a slight increase in their average household income this year, to somewhere around $71,500. Commercial farmers, on the other hand, are expected to earn an average household income of over $200,000—an increase of 22 percent from what they made in 2006. The USDA, which calculated these estimates, reports that the windfall for commercial farmers is due in large part to "demand from the rapid expansion of ethanol production."

This is good news for farmers, but what about consumers? As millions of acres have shifted from producing food to producing fuel, food prices have gone up across the board. Ethanol is not the only culprit; rising standards of living in Asia and a weak U.S. dollar are increasing demand for U.S. beef and pork overseas, which also drives up their prices at home. But there is broad agreement that increased demand for ethanol has had an impact on food prices. It's simple economics: Although farmers have planted a lot of new corn, they haven't planted enough to replace all the corn they've sold to ethanol plants. That means there is less corn to feed cows and pigs at a time when worldwide demand for beef and pork is rising. Scarcity means higher prices.

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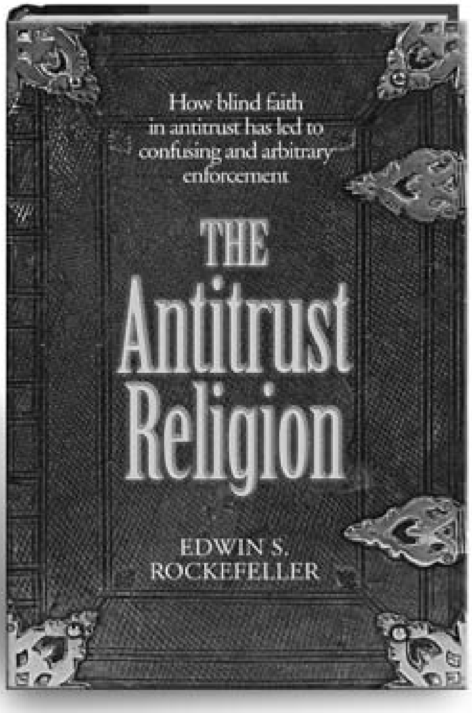
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Is ethanol at least driving down the price of oil? Republican presidential candidate Fred Thompson thinks so; he cited ethanol's potentially palliative effect on high oil prices to defend his Iowa-caucuses-inspired flip-flop on the issue. Confronted with his votes against ethanol subsidies in the Senate, Thompson told the Associated Press, "When I was in the Senate, I think oil was at $23 a barrel." This answer implied that, with oil above $80 a barrel, we need federal support for ethanol to get the price back down.

As it turns out, though, ethanol does not make gas cheaper, but high oil prices do make ethanol more expensive. Petroleum is a major input in the manufacture of ethanol—it is required not just to make ethanol, but to transport it to points of sale (since ethanol is corrosive to pipes, and must be moved by truck). In fact, there's good evidence that making ethanol requires more petroleum than making gasoline does. So if high oil prices should make us want to use less oil, we should be diminishing our ethanol consumption right now, not boosting it.

This inconvenient truth also means that ethanol won't do much to reduce CO_2 emissions. It will, however, disrupt water supplies—and a just-released report from the National Research Council finds that this is already happening in some regions, for two reasons. First, farmers are planting new corn on formerly uncultivated land—which means an increase in the total acreage that must be irrigated. Second, farmers are planting corn on acres that formerly grew other, less water-intensive crops. To put the size of this shift into perspective, consider that we now have more corn growing on American soil than at any time since World War II, when the farms of Europe had been devastated by war and America was feeding two continents. The result is not just a depletion of water resources, but more erosion and runoff into streams and rivers. Fertilizer content in this runoff has led to rampant algae growth in some river deltas, and this has decreased the water's oxygen content so drastically that no other organisms can survive.

THE NATIONAL-SECURITY ARGUMENT

Thompson made another argument that bears mentioning because it is as old as the ethanol debate itself: Federal assistance for ethanol, he said, is "a matter now of national security." Energy independence from the Middle East was the rallying cry for ethanol in 1974, when Congress first started promoting it as a response to the oil embargo. But the argument is as spurious today as it was back then.

First, even the biggest of proposed ethanol supports—an increase in mandated ethanol consumption from 7.5 billion to 15 billion gallons per year, as called for in the energy bill Congress is currently debating—would barely dent America's gasoline consumption, which is approximately 150 billion gallons annually. Two-thirds of our oil is imported, meaning that to achieve true energy independence ethanol would have to replace 100 billion gallons of gas. That's just not going to happen.

Second, only around 5 million automobiles in America are "flexible-fuel vehicles"—cars that are equipped to run on a blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline (known as E85). That's out of 135 million registered passenger cars in the United States. Also, owing to a scarcity of service stations that sell E85, most people who drive flex-fuel cars fill them up with regular gas. Simply mandating the consumption of more ethanol at the refinery level won't change these structural impediments to its adoption as an alternative to gasoline.

None of this is to deny that there is a legitimate market for ethanol. All gasoline must contain additives known as "oxygenates," and ethanol is one of them. Gasoline blenders have turned increasingly to it since MBTE—another additive—was found to contaminate groundwater. Most cars can run on blends of up to 10 percent ethanol and 90 percent gasoline. Offering consumers this "gasohol" choice lets them voluntarily support agriculture while using less gas. Gasohol is available all over Iowa, and it fuels most of my travels around the state.

But the momentum behind federal support for ethanol militates toward the production of far more than the market can absorb. Recent news reports confirm that, in a rush to expand production, the industry built too much capacity in the wake of the 2005 mandate. Even before the mandate, ethanol support took on a dizzying array of forms. There are tax credits for refineries that buy ethanol; tariffs to block the importation of cheap, sugar-based ethanol from Brazil; loan guarantees for investors in ethanol plants; and, in some states, direct payments to ethanol producers. But the *pièce de résistance* in this banquet of corporate welfare is the mandate. Amazingly, President Bush and much of Congress support doubling it.

WAY TOO MUCH

The general manager of an ethanol distillery I tour in northern Iowa—a friendly and intelligent man with a broad knowledge of the industry—says of the phased-in consumption levels set by the 2005 mandate: "We are ahead of that curve already." Industry-wide, he says, distilleries are producing more ethanol than Congress has ordered refineries to buy, and he confirms that "the anticipation [of the mandate] rather than the [mandate] itself" is what led to the building of so much capacity.

Ethanol makers may be producing above the mandated levels, but refineries aren't buying more than the law requires. This has led to cooling demand. After my visit to his distillery, I speak a second time to the general manager in Iowa. He says: "Is there a foundation to the rumors that demand is slowing down? Yes, there is." He mentions several plants that have either suspended construction or "laid off their folks and closed their doors."

For this reason, the ethanol lobby is growing ever more frantic in its demands that Congress increase the mandate and force refineries to use their surplus production. But among producers "there's a much greater degree of caution," says the general manager. "There's a lack of confidence" in Congress's ability to pass a higher mandate in time to alleviate the industry's immediate problems.

The biggest of those is of course the surplus—a failure not of hardworking people like the general manager, whose small distillery predates the ethanol boom, but of the federal policies that overheated the industry. It's a failure whose roots go back to the "temporary" Depression-era farm-subsidy program. Far from helping impoverished farmers, it has become a welfare system for mega-farms that expand and overproduce year after year, purely to receive more subsidies. In corn's case, federal support for ethanol was supposed to make the problem go away. Instead, Congress stands ready to bail out the industry again. If it does, we can expect ethanol surpluses for a long time. **NR**

Innovative Safety Technology

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By John Fleming

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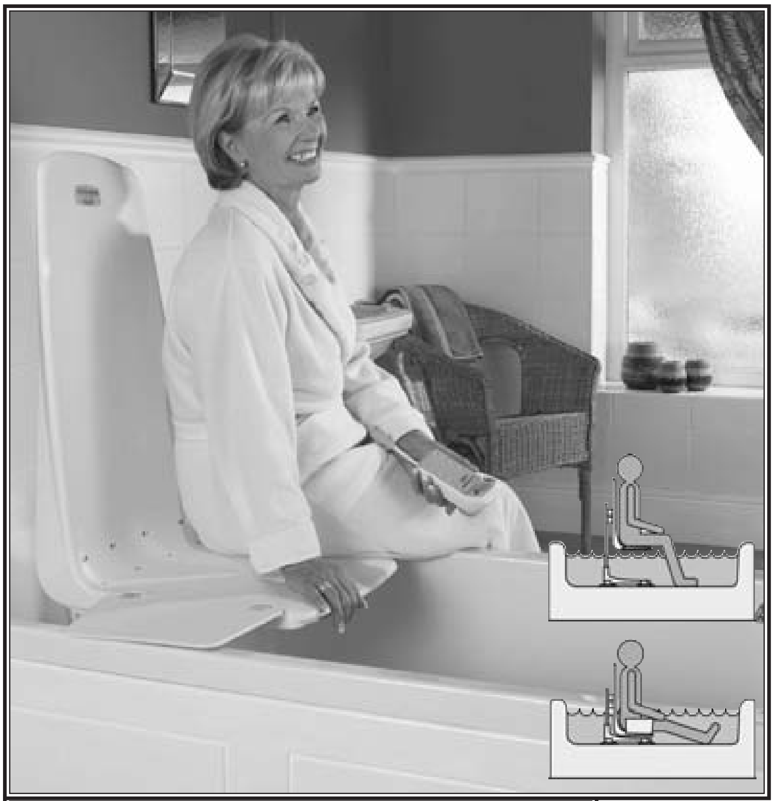

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Dealing with Warming

An appeal to reason

JIM MANZI

IF you believe that human emissions of carbon dioxide create a significant risk of negative climate change, the solution seems obvious: reduce emissions. But this conventional wisdom is exactly wrong.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—which recently, together with Al Gore, won the Nobel Peace Prize—projects that, under fairly reasonable assumptions for world population and economic growth, global temperatures will rise by 2.8°C by the year 2100, and that this will begin to create costs equal to 1 to 5 percent of global GDP sometime in the 22nd century. So, it is argued, we should begin, right now, to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide in order to prevent some or all of these costs. The most frequently discussed methods for doing this are 1) a straightforward tax on carbon and 2) an inefficient, back-door (and therefore politically more palatable) tax on carbon called a cap-and-trade system.

Now, 1 to 5 percent of global GDP is a huge amount of money, and an ounce of prevention can be worth a pound of cure. But, in the case of global warming, the values may be exactly reversed: Getting most of the carbon out of the energy cycle today would be very expensive, and a century is a long time to wait for the payoff from this investment.

As we all know from everyday life, normally I would rather have a dollar today than the promise of a dollar a year from now. I "discount" the promise: The amount of cash I would be willing to take today in lieu of that promised dollar is termed its "present value," and the percentage lower I am willing to accept today is called the "discount rate." When decisions are made on the timescale of centuries, however, discounting can have counterintuitively large effects: Consider that if the legendary sellers of Manhattan Island had put $28 in an account with a 4 percent real interest rate in 1626, they would have enough money in the bank today to buy back all of the land in Manhattan. Albert Einstein supposedly said that "the most powerful force in the universe is compound interest"—and this mathematical reality is central to the correct evaluation of plans to address the risk of climate change.

The "Stern Review," produced by the British government last year, is cited frequently as demonstrating that the world should begin immediate, aggressive emissions abatement. But William Nordhaus, a Yale professor widely considered to be the world's leading expert on this kind of integrated environmental-economic assessment, has pointed out that a crucial feature of the Stern Review was its assumption of a very low discount rate. To demonstrate just how unrealistic that assumption is, Nordhaus asks us to imagine a scenario in which global warming would lead to *zero* costs between now and the year 2200, at which point global economic growth would be permanently reduced by 0.1 percent—in other words, that economic output starting in 2200 would be 99.9 percent of what it would have been had there been no global warming. Under this scenario, how much should we be willing to pay today as a lump sum to avoid this cost? Using the assumptions of the Stern Review, Nordhaus points out, we would pay *about $30 trillion*, which is more than half of the world's entire annual economic output. Thanks, but no thanks.

Why would sophisticated advocates for rapid, aggressive emissions abatement make such an obviously unrealistic assumption? Because they're in a box. Given current global-warming-impact projections and normal economic assumptions, the costs of global warming justify only limited actions for the next several decades.

POLITICS OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

Nordhaus's modeling group estimates that the total present value of global-warming-related costs is about $22.6 trillion, which is roughly 1 percent of the present value of total global income over the next several centuries. In other words: If we simply let global warming happen, the world would generate about 99 percent of the present value of wealth it would otherwise have generated had there been no such thing as global warming.

The models indicate that we should simply let $17 trillion (about 75 percent) of that $22.6 trillion in damages happen, because it would be more expensive to avoid the damages than to accept them. Nordhaus further estimates that we could avoid the remaining $5 trillion to $6 trillion of damages by "spending" about $2 trillion on a carbon tax designed to encourage abatement. This would provide a net benefit of around $3.4 trillion, or about 0.17 percent of the present value of global GDP over the next several centuries. This carbon tax would be fairly low for a number of years—e.g., in the case of gasoline, about 9 cents per gallon through 2010—and then ramp up to fairly high levels by the second half of the century.

So, if the U.N. forecasts are correct, the global-warming hysteria is about the opportunity to create a net economic benefit of less than 0.2 percent of future global wealth creation. While not everything that matters can be measured by money, this certainly provides a different perspective than the "Manhattan would be an underwater theme park" rhetoric would suggest.

Of course, in absolute terms, $3.4 trillion is normally thought of as an amount of money that's worth pursuing. So why shouldn't we implement such a tax?

To understand why we shouldn't, let's move from the world of academic model-building to the real world of geostrategic competition and domestic politics. To realize this gain of $3.4 trillion, we would have to agree to, and enforce, a global, harmonized tax on all significant uses of carbon in any material form. This would require the agreement of—just to take a few examples—the French National Assembly, the Parliament of India, the Brazilian National Congress, the Chinese Politburo, Vladimir Putin, John Dingell, and the U.S. ethanol lobby. As is well known, all these players are completely incorruptible and solely concerned with the comprehensive

Mr. Manzi is the CEO of an applied-artificial-intelligence software company.

good of all mankind through all time, and will not let their better judgment be overruled by any narrow, sectarian interests.

All this aside, let's imagine we actually *could* negotiate such a binding agreement. Isn't it possible that all the side deals that would be required to get this done would create enough economic drag to more than offset the benefit of 0.17 percent of present value of global output? Our track record in closing and implementing such deals as the Kyoto Protocol, or even the current round of the GATT process—which, remember, is supposed to make the signatories *richer*—shouldn't inspire much confidence that the theoretical net benefits will outweigh the costs created by the agreement.

Further, even if we got to an agreement *de jure*, we would then have to enforce a set of global laws for many decades that would run directly contrary to the narrow self-interest of most people currently alive on the planet. How likely do you think a rural Chinese official would be to enforce the rules on a local coal-fired power plant? These bottom-up pressures would likely render such an agreement a dead letter, or at least make it in effect a tax applicable only to the law-abiding developed countries that represent an ever-shrinking share of global carbon emissions.

In summary, then, the best available models indicate that 1) global warming is a problem that will have only a marginal impact on the world economy, and 2) it is economically rational only to reduce slightly this marginal impact through global carbon taxes. Further, practical knowledge of the world indicates that 1) such a global carbon-tax regime would be very unlikely ever to be implemented, and 2) even if it were implemented, the theoretical benefits it might create would probably be more than offset by the economic drag it would produce.

HEDGE AGAINST RISK?

Of course, another possibility remains: Our climate projections might be wrong, and global warming could turn out to be substantially worse than these models forecast. This is the other obvious way to argue for immediate, aggressive emissions abatement. This argument has a strong form (that we *know* global warming will be worse than consensus models project) and a weak form (that global warming *might* be worse than these models project).

The strong form requires that you either be a conspiracy theorist or believe that you have special knowledge, unavailable to the world scientific community, demonstrating conclusively that the IPCC process has reached an overly conservative consensus. (Ironically, this represents a perfect mirror image of the opposite extreme position, i.e., that global warming is a big hoax.) But this is pretty hard to believe. Any side in this debate can find respectable scientists who are outliers from the consensus position to support more-alarmist or less-alarmist predictions. Large-scale science is the best available means of grinding through these claims to find

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the best possible approximation to accurate, falsifiable predictions. This process can take time to work, and is imperfect, but like all markets it tends to be self-correcting. Science, in general, *works*.

On the other hand, the weak form—the contention that the impact of global warming *might* be worse than anticipated—is persuasive. Long-term climate prediction is in its infancy. Climate models are, at a minimum, non-validated, and predicting the cost impact of various potential warming scenarios requires us to concatenate their climate predictions with economic models that predict the cost impact of these predicted temperature changes on the economy in the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd centuries. It is hubris to imagine that these can guarantee accuracy, and impossible to validate such a claim in any event. Nordhaus is admirably realistic about long-term environmental-economic assessment models when he states that their functional purpose is to make sure that our "answers are at least internally consistent." Ultimately, we can predict reliably neither what impact human activities will have on the climate nor the resulting impact of these climate changes on the economy over multiple decades and centuries.

So, once we clear away the underbrush, we can see that the case for a carbon tax is really that it would be a hedge against the risk that actual damages from warming will be worse than current projections. Would it be a smart investment?

To evaluate this, start with the observation that the primary purpose of such a tax is not to encourage conservation per se, but rather to induce the development of new technologies that can de-link economic growth from damaging accumulations of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Increasing the price of carbon would cause some direct reduction in fossil-fuel consumption (e.g., biking to work instead of driving), and get more people to use some pre-existing technologies (e.g., efficient light bulbs), but these effects would be limited: Hairshirts are not enough. We would have to develop new technologies that use energy more efficiently, emit less carbon per unit of energy, remove carbon from the atmosphere, and/or reduce the harm done by carbon dioxide. The real costs of a program to address global warming are crucially dependent on how much time and money it would take to develop and diffuse these technologies, plus the incremental costs per unit of energy (if any) they would impose once deployed.

Seen from this perspective, many aspects of the carbon-tax debate become clearer. Carbon-tax advocates pay lip service to the naïve idea that the developing world will impose large carbon taxes if we just "lead by example." Of course, under the reasonable assumption that the relevant technologies will be developed primarily in the U.S., EU, Japan, Canada, and Australia, it doesn't really matter that much whether the developing world introduces these taxes, or fails to do so for a long time. The global crusade is a smokescreen: The goal is to tax the use of carbon in the developed world. Further, in spite of the fact that most analyses indicate that the optimum theoretical carbon tax should be quite low for a number of years, most advocates want to push for as large a tax as possible, as soon as possible, in order to force industry to create new technologies quickly. The pain of the tax is *the whole point*, and, to this way of thinking, more pain means more gain.

This would probably "work," in that it would spur new technological development; but it would be insanely expensive. It's hard to predict accurately the costs of such a program, but it would certainly start at hundreds of billions of dollars in the U.S. alone. In practice, the reality is that no matter what happens in the future, the tax would almost certainly not go away for many years, and it would be almost politically impossible to somehow trade away other taxes to keep the total tax burden unchanged.

Of course, there are other ways to try to stimulate the development of the required technologies. One obvious approach is to have the government fund technology development directly. I have proposed just such a research program in this magazine ("Game Plan," June 25, 2007). Even if it had a controlled funding mechanism, it would, like all such programs, be rife with inefficiencies. But consider that the cost of such a program could be single-digit billions per year—a tiny fraction of the costs of imposing a large U.S. carbon tax. You could be massively inefficient, and still be far better off.

A large carbon tax is most likely a one-way door: Once we introduce it we're stuck with it for a long time.

A large carbon tax is also, most likely, a one-way door: Once we introduce it we're stuck with it for a long time. Therefore, keeping our options open has great value. What if our models are too aggressive, and there is no practical economic justification for emissions reductions for centuries, if ever? What if the technological leverage point turns out to be a non-point-source scrubber that can remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere at low cost, so that there is really no reason not to emit CO_2 all day long? There are very large potential regrets to a carbon tax.

The only real argument for implementing a large, immediate carbon tax boils down to the point that you can't prove a negative. If it turns out that our predictions for global-warming impacts are enormously conservative and disaster looms if we don't change our ways radically and this instant, then we really should start shutting down power plants and confiscating cars tomorrow morning. We have no good evidence that such a disaster scenario is imminent, but nobody can conceivably prove it to be impossible.

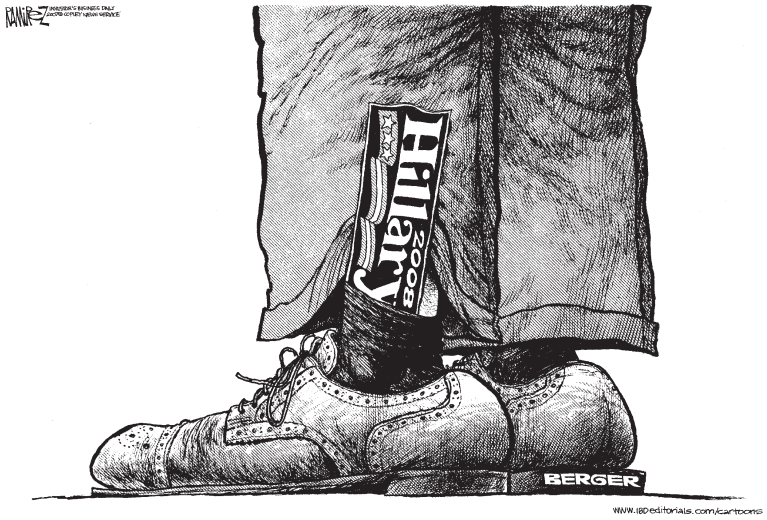
Hedging against the risk to future generations of potential unanticipated impacts from global warming is a legitimate job for the U.S. government. Ideally, it would be tackled by the governments of the small number of countries with a sophisticated technology-development capability acting in some kind of coordinated fashion. A massive carbon tax, or its equivalent in the form of a cap-and-trade system, is billed as a prudent reaction to this risk, but it is the opposite: an impractical, panicky reaction unworthy of a serious government. **NR**

HELP!!!!

Fred Debates, Finally

D'Amato coached; he wasn't bad.
His poise was pleasing, but let's add
The Hunt for Red October *was*
Where Fred bedazzled: That's the buzz
From Fox to loopy CNN
The morning after. Dobson's pen
(Fred's not been seen with Beelzebub)
Will quibble this side of a snub.

—W. H. von Dreele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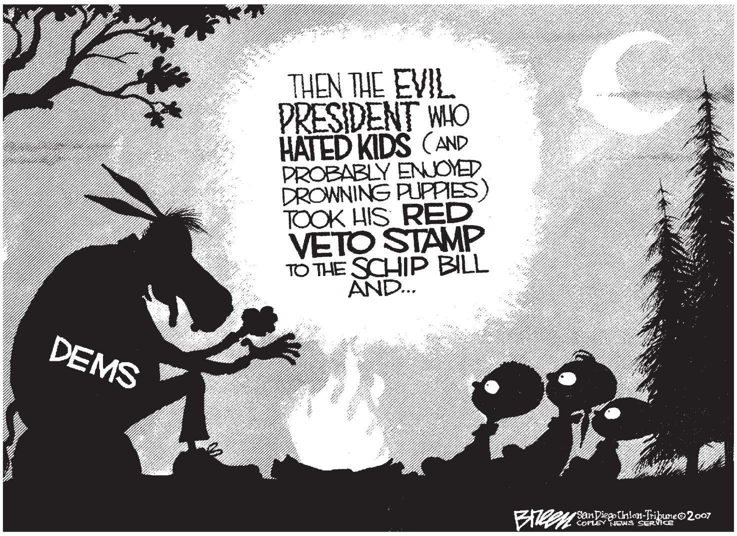
THEN THE EVIL PRESIDENT WHO HATED KIDS (AND PROBABLY ENJOYED DROWNING PUPPIES) TOOK HIS RED VETO STAMP TO THE SCHIP BILL AND...
DEMS
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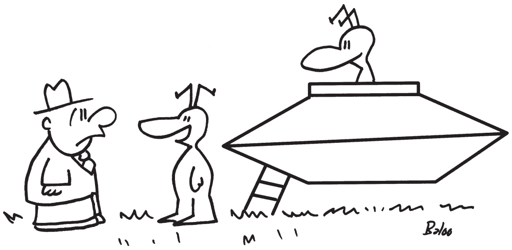
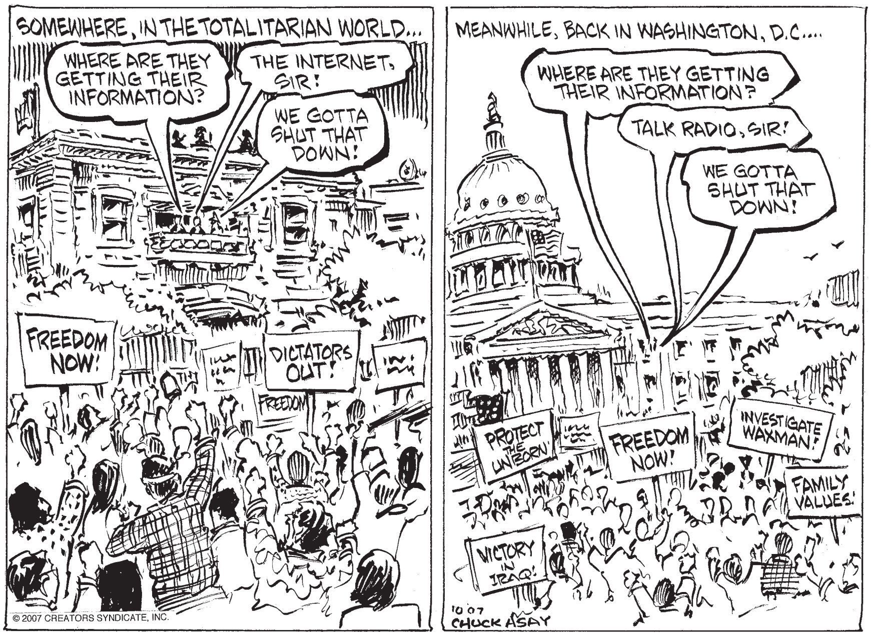


"We're not too late for the illegal-alien amnesty, are we?"


SOMEWHERE, IN THE TOTALITARIAN WORLD...
WHERE ARE THEY GETTING THEIR INFORMATION?
THE INTERNET, SIR!
WE GOTTA SHUT THAT DOWN!
FREEDOM NOW!
DICTATORS OUT!
FREEDOM
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MEANWHILE, BACK IN WASHINGTON, D.C....
WHERE ARE THEY GETTING THEIR INFORMATION?
TALK RADIO, SIR!
WE GOTTA SHUT THAT DOWN!
PROTECT THE UNBORN
FREEDOM NOW!
INVESTIGATE WAXMAN!
FAMILY VALUES!
VICTORY IN IRAQ!
10 07 CHUCK ASAY

the long view

ROB LONG

Hello Congressman!

Hard to believe it's been almost one year since we here at MessageMassage™ helped you and your colleagues get elected to Congress. Yes, 2006 was a historic year for Democrats, and as your political consultants, we'd like to take this opportunity to wish you a very happy anniversary!

Obviously, we're all a little disappointed that one of our major promises—to completely withdraw from Iraq—remains unkept. Likewise our health-care initiatives, defense rollbacks, tax hikes, and assorted other plans.

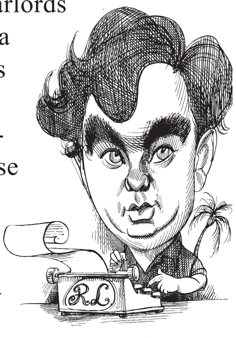
But as part of our continuing post-election service, the gang here at MessageMassage™ has been working with Speaker Pelosi on what we think is a wonderful new tactic, CondemNation™.

As many of our California clients are aware, in 1915–1917, the then-collapsing Ottoman Empire conducted a vicious campaign of slaughter and terror against its Armenian population. Although it's too late to do something to save the almost 1.5 million dead, it's not too late to *say* something. The recent vote in the House of Representatives to condemn the Armenian Genocide™ may come 90 years after the Grand Vizier and his dancing boys fled from the confines of the Sublime Porte, but it came just in time to see an uptick in Speaker Pelosi's favorable/non-favorable rating among her Armenian constituents.

Which got us thinking. History is literally chock-full of all sorts of outrages—rapes, assassinations, famines, you name it!—and as we gear up for another grueling election cycle, it's a wise strategy to analyze your constituent base and match an outrage to condemn.

Not all of you are blessed with a thriving Armenian constituency, with its hot-tempered population still smoldering about the Armenian Genocide™. But a lot of you have Koreans, and the conquest of the ancient Koryo Empire in what is now northern China saw an awful lot of unnecessary bloodshed, even for 6th-century Asia. A resolution condemning China for its part in the illegal conquest could be just the trick to get those Korean numbers up. Not to mention a terrific opener to a fundraising speech at the next Korean Small Business Association Breakfast.

You say you don't have any Koreans in your district, but are lousy with Thais? How about the famous "land grab" circa AD 900, when warlords from what is now Cambodia marauded through what was once part of the King of Siam's non-official protectorate? Perfect for a House resolution condemning the Lotus Flower Kingdom for its actions! No Thais? No problem! How about Italians (the atrocities of the mercenary armies of Clovis) or Pacific Islanders (cannibal invaders from Borneo) or Russians (Napoleon!). It's really just a matter of mix 'n' match, just in time for direct-mail season.



With our proprietary CondemNation™ software, you can connect with your constituents on a powerful, emotional level. Our unique algorithm analyzes the cultural background of your district, scours a highly detailed historical database for potential genocides, and creates a customized, tailor-made media plan to let your constituents know that you care about the lootings, murders, rapes—whatever! you name it!—of the past. And our instant one-click user-friendly interface allows you to identify a constituency, choose a past outrage, drop a direct-mail package, and introduce a House resolution all from your BlackBerry or other handheld device. It's really that simple!

Some of you may be thinking, "Sure, this sounds great for my colleagues with traditionally cranky, irritable ethnic groups in their districts. But all I've got are tame, dough-faced, easy-going Norwegians. What about me?"

While it's true that certain groups are harder to rile—Norwegians especially—CondemNation™ can be adjusted to suit these cooler-headed Scandinavian groups. As you are no doubt aware, most of the traditional Norse gods—we're thinking primarily of Thor and Woden—have been expunged from modern religious practices at the same time that they've been bastardized in our language. Here at MessageMassage™, we're currently focus-grouping Scandinavian-American voter response to a movement to return the days of the week "Wednesday" to "Wodensday," and "Thursday" back to "Thorsday." The results so far are uniformly positive, and we here at MessageMassage™ are cautiously optimistic that the new hot-button issue of CulturalGenocide™ may be a terrific avenue to connecting with voters who, traditionally, haven't had a genocide to call their own.

From all of us here, we're looking forward to working with your team to make 2008 another banner year for House Democrats. There's no reason why a lack of progress on issues such as Iraq, health care, the economy, education, defense, the War on Terror, judgeships, and taxes should hinder our ability to connect with voters. In 2006, the voters were mad as hell and they swept us into Congress. In 2008, they're still mad as hell, but each group is mad about its own wonderfully diverse set of things. Let's celebrate that diversity!

Cheers!

The Team at MessageMassage™

WHAT A D*** GOOD BOOK!

GET BILL BUCKLEY'S NEW CLASSIC DIRECT FROM *NR*

"Buckley," as John Leonard once wrote, "—part Magus, prestidigitating supply-side whoopee, and part matador, goring liberal bulls—is in perpetual motion. He edits magazines, proliferates newspaper columns, anchors television programs, skis, sails, and speechifies. In and around those activities, on the keyboard of his Toshiba laptop, from the back-seat command module of his customized-in-Texarkana Cadillac limousine, or from the Gstaad chalet where he oil-paints with Nivens and side-slips with Galbraiths, or at the helm of his ketch, *Sealestial*, somewhere between the Galapagos and Byzantium, like G. K. Chesterton and Moses Herzog . . . Buckley writes letters to the world."

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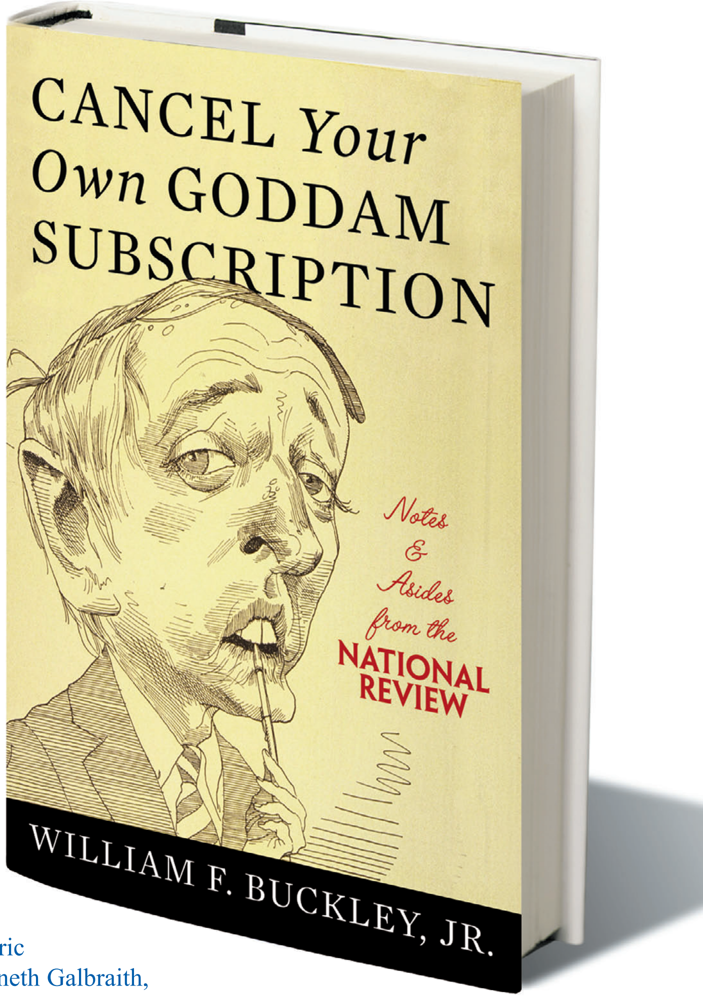
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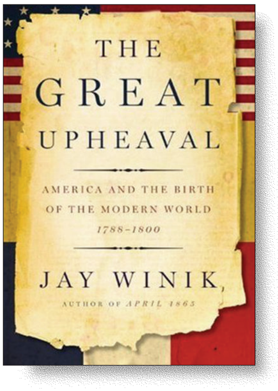
It Was a New World



The Great Upheaval: America and the Birth of the Modern World 1788–1800, by Jay Winik (HarperCollins, 688 pp., $29.95)

MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

IN his insightful and brilliantly narrated new book, Jay Winik tells the stories of the French Revolution, the war between Catherine the Great's Russia and the Ottoman Empire, and the United States from the adoption of the Constitution to the election of Jefferson—three chapters from the waning years of the 18th century that, together, amount to what Winik calls a "great upheaval," the "crucible" that formed the modern world.

This global perspective enables Winik to put the events of the 1790s in a fresh light. How better, he asks, "to comprehend the greatest generation of talent in American history: the visionary Hamilton, the sublime Jefferson, the iconoclastic Adams, and the sober Madison, than to see them in relation to the great revolutionary spirits of France"—or, for that matter, to the Machiavellian Russian brain trust that included the mesmerizing Potemkin? The enigmatic character of Catherine the Great, he argues, becomes more comprehensible when she is viewed through an American prism: "If she had been an American, she would have been part Jefferson, part Washington, part Hamilton, hard as that combination is to fathom." As for the "age's master spirit, George Washington," he is best understood, Winik writes, when seen "in the same frame as a confused and dispirited Louis XVI."

Mr. Beran's new book is *Forge of Empires 1861–1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made.*

Not merely a transnational study, *The Great Upheaval* is at the same time a contribution to the ongoing revival of Whig history. At the heart of Whig history is the question of how free states are made and how they are unmade. In his attempt to answer the question, Winik looks to the philosophical revolutions that drove the state-making efforts of the late 18th century:

> Following on the heels of Bacon and Descartes, Bayle and Spinoza, and above all, the venerated Englishmen Locke and Newton, the most famous of all philosophes were the French trio, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Yet trio is almost a misnomer. Profound, diverse, idiosyncratic, and filled with reforming zeal, each man differed considerably from the others. But in turn, each was lauded as a literary genius. Together they helped spawn a distinguished list of followers—d'Alembert, Buffon, Turgot, Helvetius, Baron Grimm, and Diderot, and as the historian Bernard Bailyn has pointed out, Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Adams, and Madison, too. And together, their powerful conclusions spawned a belief, one that radiated outward, radically and exponentially, in Europe, east and west, off to Russia, and far away to the colonies in North America, which would set minds ablaze and soon help kindle two great revolutions, not to mention a counterrevolution. . . . The philosophes spoke of a rightly ordered government that best guaranteed social welfare. They talked of political liberty and intellectual freedom. And just as often as not, of equality . . .

If there is a weakness in Winik's account of the Enlightenment, it is that he pays too little attention to the differences between the French Enlightenment on one hand and the Anglo-Scottish Enlightenment on the other. In his book *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville argued that the faith of the French Enlightenment in a rationally directed system of administrative control profoundly influenced the character of the French Revolution: "Beneath the seemingly chaotic surface" of the Revolution, Tocqueville wrote,

> there was developing a vast, highly centralized power which attracted to itself and welded into an organic whole all the elements of authority and influence that hitherto had been dispersed among a crowd of lesser, uncoordinated powers: the three Orders of the State, professional bodies, families, and individuals. Never since the fall of the Roman Empire had the world seen a government so highly centralized. This new power was created by the Revolution or, rather, grew up almost automatically out of the havoc wrought by it. True, the governments it set up were less stable than any of those it overthrew; yet, paradoxically, they were infinitely more powerful.

In contrast to Tocqueville, Winik is willing to give the French Enlightenment and its revolutionary disciples the benefit of the doubt. The French Convention, he writes, "devised metric and decimal systems, established a welfare state, proclaimed universal primary education, and founded or restored the School of Medicine and the Ecole Polytechnique. And it had ruled a revolutionary nation that bequeathed magnificent and inspiring words to the world, as well as to future generations." The broken eggs, in other words, had made an omelet.

Whatever one thinks of the French revolutionaries' vision of liberty, it was the product of moral, political, and philosophical traditions very different from the Anglo-Scottish ones that influenced the founders of the United States. The Anglo-Scottish philosophers, Friedrich Hayek argued, "laid the foundations of a profound and essentially valid theory"; the French school, he maintained, "was simply and completely wrong." In contrast to the French philosophes, with their faith in the rational powers of a caste of enlightened administrators, the Anglo-Scottish thinkers, Hayek said, offered "an interpretation of the growth of civilization that is still the indispensable foundation of the argument for liberty." They found the origin of free institutions "not in contrivance or design, but in the survival of the successful." Successful moral and political systems, the Anglo-Scottish thinkers contended, owed less to the conscious deliberations of lawgivers than to the gradual and unpremeditated evolution of customs, laws, and institutions.

The French revolutionaries scrapped hereditary traditions and institutions; English and American revolutionaries reformed them. The French made a fetish of reason; the English and Americans were guided by experience. Macaulay, in his history of the Revolution of 1688, pointed to just how *little* the English revolutionary statesmen did: "Not a single flower of the crown was touched. Not a single new right was given to the people. . . . Some controverted points had been decided according to the sense of the best jurists; and there had been a slight deviation from the ordinary course of succession. This was all; and this was enough."

The American Founders had of course to do more than this—they had not merely to reform but also to create. Yet what is striking is how greatly their approach to revolutionary creation differed from that of their counterparts in France. In marking up the English precedents (how many phrases in the American Constitution possess deep roots in the legal and constitutional soil of England) they preserved as much as they created; and what they could leave alone they did leave alone.

Whatever their differences, the American and French revolutionaries were united by a desire to create free states; Catherine II of Russia, by contrast, did not deviate from the path of the autocracy. It is true that, like Frederick the Great of Prussia, she toyed with the ideas of the French philosophes; but, after all, the philosophes' ideal of rationally directed authority was in many ways congenial to despots. Catherine's reputation as a reformer and an "enlightened legislatrix" is wholly spurious. Her legal code, the *Nakaz*, was largely cribbed from Montesquieu; it was also ludicrously remote from the conditions of Russia. Much of the code was not implemented, and what little was implemented was not enforced. Torture was theoretically abolished; yet those who defied the Tsaritsa, Winik writes, were likely to find themselves left to rot in iron cages, or "hung from their ribs by a thick metal hook." The most forward-looking act of Catherine's reign was to confirm the decision of her husband, Peter III—whom she deposed and at whose murder she connived—to abolish monopolies and liberalize commerce. The policies she herself initiated were generally reactionary. Her war against the Ottoman Empire, vividly recounted by Winik, was in no way liberal. It was neither a crusade for freedom nor an attempt to defeat religiously inspired jihad. It was instead a struggle between rival despotisms for territory: Catherine made war on the Sublime Porte, not because she wanted to liberate the Balkans, but because she hoped to impose her will on Byzantium. Winik praises Catherine as a "spectacular" figure who "loved life and all its wonders: books, men, animals (dogs especially), trees, games, laughter, and children." But it's not clear what, if anything, she contributed to the "birth of the modern world."

No account of *The Great Upheaval* would be complete without a tribute to the narrative skill of its author. Winik writes with an enthusiasm and a fervor somewhat reminiscent of Carlyle. His portraits are memorable, and special mention should be made of his narrative of the doomed Louis XVI and his queen, a dramatic and a touching story. **NR**

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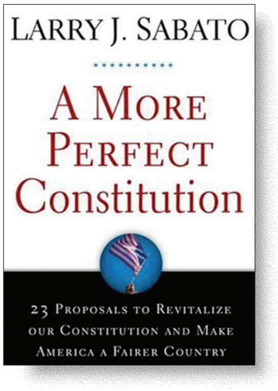
LARRY J. SABATO
A MORE PERFECT Constitution
23 PROPOSALS TO REVITALIZE OUR CONSTITUTION AND MAKE AMERICA A FAIRER COUNTRY

A More Perfect Constitution: 23 Proposals to Revitalize Our Constitution and Make America a Fairer Country, by Larry J. Sabato (Walker & Co., 352 pp., $25.95)

MATTHEW J. FRANCK

As I was reading Larry Sabato's earnest good-government proposals to alter fundamental features of the U.S. Constitution in order to make our country "fairer," my mind kept returning to a story Thomas Jefferson told of a conversation with John Adams and Alexander Hamilton in 1791, when all three served in George Washington's administration. When the talk turned to the British constitution, Adams remarked that if it could be purged of its "corruption" it would be perfect. Hamilton replied that if the British followed that advice their system would become "impracticable," and that *with* its corruption it was "the most perfect government which ever existed." Just so. I kept thinking, "Hands off my Constitution, Professor Sabato: Not despite its imperfections, but because of them, it is just fine as is." So powerful was this effect of Sabato's book on my thinking that I found myself rejecting constitutional-reform ideas that I had once embraced.

Mr. Franck is professor and chairman of political science at Radford University, and a regular contributor to NRO's "Bench Memos" blog on the courts.

Sabato—a renowned University of Virginia political scientist who recently became even more famous by making the most accurate prediction of the 2006 congressional-election results—offers 23 ideas for improving the Constitution, and urges his readers to consider calling a new constitutional convention (as Article V permits) to debate them. His proposals may be grouped into minor and relatively harmless adjustments; hardy perennials of unproven value; radical structural changes of a potentially dangerous character; and downright cockeyed ideas straight out of the late-night college bull session.

In the first group we find such proposals as guaranteeing cost-of-living raises for federal judges, dropping the requirement that presidents be "native-born" citizens, and eliminating the personal freedom of the members of the Electoral College. Each of these may be a fine idea, but none could be called urgent—certainly not urgent enough to call a national convention. In the second category are congressional term limits, nonpartisan drawing of House districts, still more campaign finance "reform," a provision requiring a balanced budget, and another supplying presidents with a line-item veto over appropriations. Each of these waxes and wanes in popularity, but claims for their beneficial effects are almost certainly overblown. It is not even clear that any of them addresses a real problem. In a lengthy discussion of a balanced-budget requirement, for instance, Sabato can do no better than to assert repeatedly that "we have permitted a giant fiscal problem to build"; he produces nothing by way of a solid showing that the national debt is a danger to the future of the American economy.

But it is Sabato's structural radicalism that will draw the most attention. Professing his fealty to the framers' principles of separation of powers and federalism, he nevertheless proposes to increase the size of the Senate by adding members for the 25 largest states; to constitutionalize some version of the 1973 War Powers Act to enable congressional meddling in the presidential conduct of wars; to expand the House of Representatives to 1,000 members; and to draw the U.S. closer to a parliamentary system by aligning three-year House terms and six-year Senate terms with the rhythms of a six-year presidency. Despite Sabato's claim that his proposals should be considered together at a convention because they "interconnect," he appears to have done relatively little thinking about the long-term changes in the character of American politics that could result from what he proposes. What seems to unite many of Sabato's ideas is a conviction on his part that our government often "seems hopelessly deadlocked on issues of immediate concern to the country." Yet he presents no compelling case that gridlock, stumbling, delay, voter apathy, rampant self-interest, factional influence, and thrusting institutional and personal ambitions are not, taken all in all, good things rather than bad ones in a big, complicated republic made up of self-governing states. Like many professional observers of our politics, Sabato seems to have caught the occupational virus that leads one to

A LAST WORD

We are coming to the end. Poems that resemble
wild dogs tamed at great cost and made to tremble
obediently at my side have now regressed.
They need new masters, those who know dogs best.

There is a sound of someone breathing. Sun
falls like a thought behind a mountain's brow—
the old life over, the new life unbegun,
and nothing more to say. At least for now.

—ROBERT MEZEY

lament, “Why can’t those politicians be as rational as my students and I are in my classroom?”

In some cases Sabato evinces a plain misunderstanding of what it is we should want our institutions to do if they did work perfectly well. When he wants to limit federal judges to 15-year terms (with mandatory retirement at 75—but why would we need both changes?), Sabato argues that we should be bothered by judges who “represent the views and outlooks of past generations better than the present day,” or who “stymie reforms that the American people have decisively voted for,” because they are “too detached . . . from the American mainstream.” This is a thorough misjudgment of the purposes of the judiciary. Limited judicial terms may be one of the rare good ideas in this book, but Sabato has the case for them almost exactly backward.

Finally we come to the ideas that seem to be the products of the exhausted all-nighter. Sabato wants to make the presidential nomination process more rational, undoing the “front-loading” of primaries and caucuses that gives disproportionate weight to small, unrepresentative states that get the earliest spots on the calendar. But he doesn’t pause to consider the consequences of writing into the Constitution the nomination rules for political parties, which are still in many decisive respects private associations whose workings are none of the Constitution’s business.

The weirdest and most anti-democratic idea in this book is that all former presidents and vice presidents be offered lifetime seats as “national senators” with no particular constituency. The most Rube Goldbergian is that the president be elected for a single term of six years; that he have the personal option of seeking two additional final years in office in a stand-alone “approval” referendum in his fifth year; that if he loses that bid (or forgoes it) a regular election follow in the succeeding year; that if he wins the two extra years the next presidential election will be in his eighth year instead; and that in that case the seats in both houses of Congress will be filled for a two-year term instead of the usual three or six years, so that all members of Congress are elected when a new president is chosen. Sabato is really taken with this notion, and has a flow chart to

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explain it, but it's hard to credit this mutant offspring of the parliamentary idea as a solution to the problem of a "confused electorate."

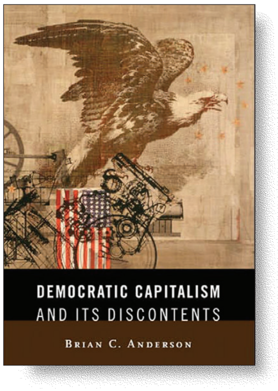
Pervading this book are conflicting notes of fervor for change combined with shortsightedness about reform's consequences; praise of the framers' foresight combined with ill-argued criticism of the present state of their legacy; and handwringing about our dysfunctional contemporary politics and our "public ignorance" combined with boyish boosterism about how much "the most educated, professional electorate and the most thoroughly representative, mentally sharp group of politically active citizens in [America's] history" can be trusted to dismantle and rebuild the Constitution. The original meaning of the word "enthusiasm" comes to mind: "prophetic or poetic frenzy," not altogether of one's right mind.

The last two big ideas in *A More Perfect Constitution* nicely display Sabato's divine madness. The first is a constitutional requirement that young people ages 18 to 26 perform two years of "national service" at the taxpayers' expense. Such conscription into public drudgery is premised on a nostalgia for both the mid-20th-century draft and the New Deal's makework Civilian Conservation Corps, refashioned by Sabato into a feel-good "civic engagement" project. Readers who catch a whiff of some sort of Youth Korps may be forgiven.

The last big idea in the book brings us back to its beginning: the proposal of an Article V constitutional convention. On this score, Sabato is far too sanguine that the rules of such a convention can be rigged beforehand to control and channel its work in the directions he wants. I have just two words for him: Remember Philadelphia. Things went well there, but hardly owing to any predetermined expectations respected by the delegates.

Maybe it is a defining characteristic of a conservative to believe that we cannot get that lucky twice in just three or four centuries. Call me Alexander Hamilton Pangloss: What we have—with all its frustrations and grinding inefficiencies—is the best of all possible constitutions. **NR**

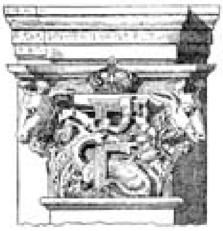
Vision Things



Democratic Capitalism
and Its Discontents,
by Brian C. Anderson
(ISI, 225 pp., $25)

S. T. KARNICK

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the effective end of international Communism, and given that radical Islam is a thorn in our side but no long-term threat to Western culture, democratic capitalism no longer faces any plausible external threats. It confronts plenty of serious internal ones, however, as Brian C. Anderson makes clear in this new book.



Anderson, editor of *City Journal* and author of *South Park Conservatives*, is concerned about whether democratic capitalism can continue to survive, particularly in its greatest historical bastion, the United States. A particular worry is whether there are elements in democratic capitalism itself that inevitably press toward its demise. He observes that "the notion of the universal equality of man, which liberal democracy claims as its foundation," has inevitably unleashed "an egalitarian spirit that it could never really tame." Economic and social freedom create inequality, because not all people are equally gifted, but if everyone is created equal yet not everyone is equal in fact, something must be wrong.

Pursuing this materialistic conception to the point of obsession, the Western Left promotes as remedy "an aggressive secularism, an overweening state, and a transformation of constitutional law into partisan politics." Resolutely avoiding the sin of despair, Anderson answers the critique by outlining both the real achievements of free societies and the intellectual and cultural foundations for them. Key among his insights is that the defenders of freedom tend to take a very practical view of life, judging ideas and policies by the consequences they bring, whereas opponents of liberty want to force reality into a mold based on their imaginings of an ideal society. The radicals' vision isn't connected to an understanding of how human beings really are; that's why they end up attacking all the organically developed institutions and ideas that make a free society work—economic freedom, religious faith (especially Christianity), individual liberty, rule of law, the principle of subsidiarity, the family, and public morality.

At the center of the conflict is religion. "Post-Christian Europe has unsurprisingly sunken progressively deeper into moral relativism," Anderson writes; and the differences between Europe and America are clearly a result of two entirely different worldviews. Despite the presence in America of a fairly influential though relatively small atheist contingent and some strong currents of relativism and antinomianism, "religious conservatives profoundly shape American society. . . . They are a transpolitical presence in almost every walk of American life. In this way, they continue indirectly to influence political society by helping to 'regulate' political mores."

This infuriates both European and American statists, for Christians and many Jews consistently champion the very things that stand in the way of the creation of a new and (as imagined) vastly better society. That, I think, is what they really hate about Judaism and especially Christianity: not the belief in God as such, but the fact that the belief in an all-powerful God who cares about individual human beings makes people much more reluctant to indulge in coer-

Mr. Karnick is research director of the Heartland Institute. His website is The American Culture (http://stkarnick.com).

cive schemes to transform people and their surroundings to fit materialistic dogma.

The purveyors of modern liberalism relentlessly impose these utopian visions regardless of the disasters they create, and then use the resulting catastrophes as an excuse for more ambitious schemes even further disconnected from reality. As Anderson observes in his critique of the lionized liberal philosopher John Rawls: “The egalitarian liberalism Rawls called justice would be unworkable in practice, even if it were desirable. His works do not speak to any recognizable political world and ignore almost completely the real dilemmas and tragedies of our time.” Similarly, Jean-Paul Sartre’s work “stands as an absolute warning about the wrong turns that moral and political thought can take when untethered from nature or any sense of reality.” The hate-filled revolutionary blather of Antonio Negri, the Italian co-author of the immensely popular 2000 socialist screed *Empire*, expresses nothing but contempt for ordinary people and is simply another example of “the adolescent thrill of perpetual rebellion.” This mentality *in extremis* is most luridly evident in fascism and Communism—which, Anderson writes, “desolated entire nations . . . in their quest to revolutionize the bourgeois economic and political condition.”

> **The great challenge for contemporary defenders of freedom may be to create a vision of a free society that sounds as good as the fantastic schemes of the utopians.**

The central question is how to understand in a healthy manner the idea of popular sovereignty. French philosopher Bertrand de Jouvenel observed the rise of what Anderson describes as “the idea that ‘the people,’ not some divine source or ancient custom, have final authority on all matters of law and social organization.” While that may sound completely benign, Anderson notes, it actually “erodes the restraints on what political communities can imagine doing” and “encourages the notion that the state is a tool for directly securing the people’s well-being.” As a result, even in democracies no practical concerns can ultimately constrain the perpetual amassing of government power toward any ends that ambitious and influential people may conceive.

Anderson thus observes, after Tocqueville, that the great current threat to democratic capitalism is inherent in democracy itself, as “the democratic regime threatens to eliminate every reference point beyond the sovereign individual” and eats away everything except the pursuit of material gain—which is a pretty good description of our current Western political situation. Anderson—himself avoiding any utopian temptation—ultimately offers no specific solution to this fundamental problem. Instead he posits a “humbled modernity” that “distrusts any utopian efforts” and is “aware of the limits of what the state or any centralized authority can do.” Such a negative, conservative response, however, is hardly calculated to fire the imagination of those headed to political combat. (Yelling “Stop!” is not nearly as appealing as yelling “Go!”) The great challenge for contemporary defenders of freedom may be to create a vision of a free society that sounds as good as the fantastic schemes of the utopians, if that is indeed possible. And it may well be: The fact is, freedom works. Free people reduce economic inequality, lift multitudes out of poverty, cure diseases, clean up the environment, and make lives longer and more comfortable. And social freedom need not undermine religion or morality. Echoing sociologist Rodney Stark and others, Anderson attributes America’s religious strength to the nation’s “free market of religions.” When people are truly free to choose, they tend to be religious, as America demonstrates so vividly.

Perhaps, then, there is indeed a highly appealing picture that champions of freedom can draw—of Ronald Reagan’s “shining city upon a hill,” a place of both liberty and order, where people are free to pursue their dreams as long as they don’t harm others, and in which their dreams are constrained by a modest sense of their place in the world based on a recognition of their humble status before the Almighty. The world is always going to have its share of dreamers, so we might as well give them something good to dream about. **NR**

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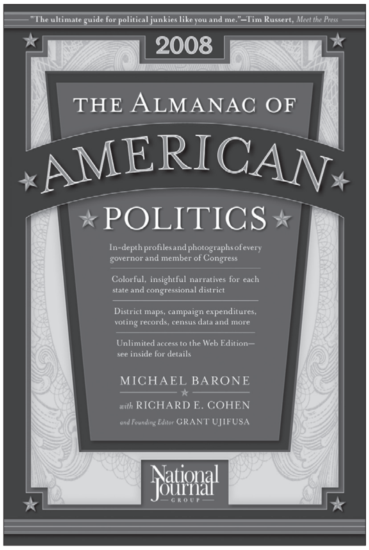
“The Bible of American politics.”
—George Will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■ ART ■

Pleasures of The Iconic

ROGER KIMBALL

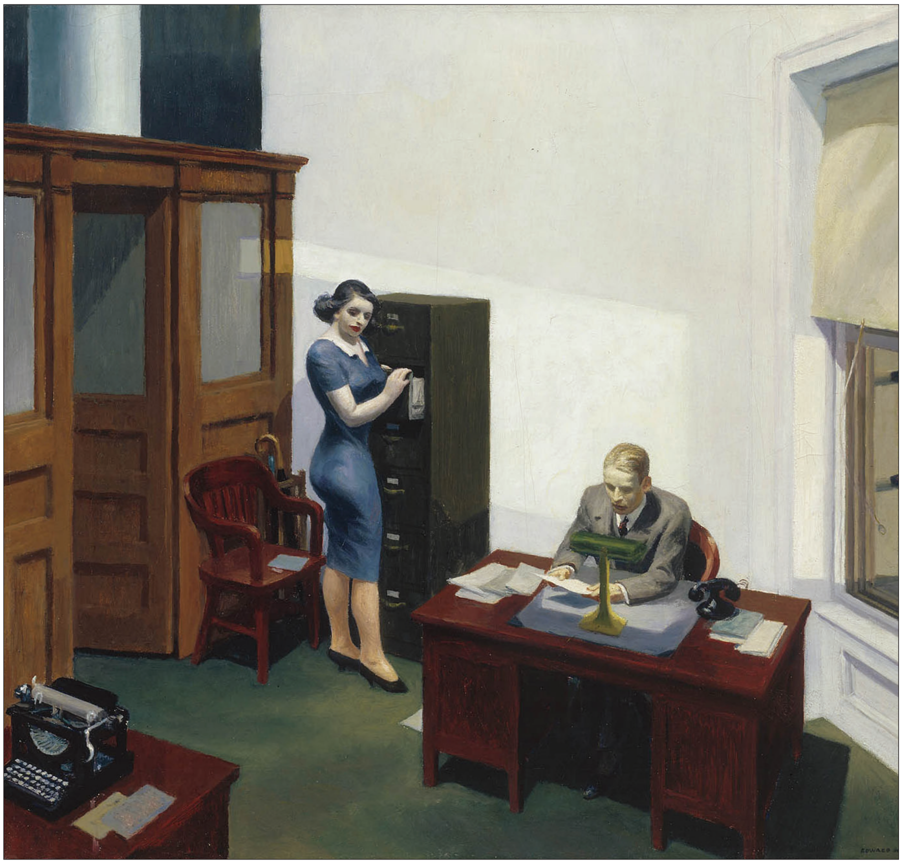
"ICONIC" seems to be the season's word of choice for the paintings of Edward Hopper (1882–1967). The press material for the Hopper retrospective that just opened at Washington's National Gallery (having been on view all summer at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston) pushes the word into service early and often about such familiar works as *Automat* (1927), *Chop Suey* (1929), *Early Sunday Morning* (1930), and above all *Nighthawks* (1942). "Iconic" is an impressive-sounding epithet. What do you suppose it means? Something positive, no doubt about that. Only famous images get to be called "iconic." But it is worth pausing over the word. According to my dictionary, "iconic" has two distinct meanings: 1. "having the character of an icon," i.e., "an important and enduring symbol," and 2. "having a conventional formulaic style. Used of certain memorial statues and busts." In fact, Hopper's best-known work is iconic in both senses: It's memorably symbolic and deeply formulaic. That conjunction touches on the peculiar strength as well as the limitation of Hopper's art.

It is not surprising that Hopper is an immensely popular artist. His pleasing deployment of color and easygoing presentation of the paraphernalia of everyday life give his work an immediate warmth and likability. His muted palette, careful modulation of hues, and soft-edged precision are a recipe for visual charm. Considered simply as aesthetic objects, Hopper's pictures make few demands: They are, on the contrary, quietly inveigling, almost seductive in their plain-as-day obviousness. And if we've never seen diners or drug stores or city streets exactly like the ones that Hopper paints, we've seen ones that remind us of them—or vice versa. Hopper seems to give us the very essence of Diner, the graven reality of Pharmacy or Automat, his stylization communicating an intense period feel that also seems universal, placeless, torn somehow out of time.

In Wallace Stevens's poem "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," one of the criteria announced for successful art is that "it must give pleasure." It is a commonplace that aesthetic pleasure is often a deprecated quality in modern art. But Hopper was from the beginning a beguiling artist. He grew up in Nyack, N.Y., overlooking the Hudson River, and the views from those windows of reflected sunlight formed an indelible library of impressions that served Hopper ever after. From 1900 to 1905, he studied at the New York School of Art, where Robert Henri, doyen of the Ash Can School, and the American impressionist William Merritt Chase were particularly important influences—imparting, in Henri's case, a fresh involvement with quotidian realities of urban life and, in Chase's, the seductive lure of visual decorousness. During these student years, Hopper made three trips to Paris where he tried on for size and then largely discarded Parisian weariness and sophistication. Such early paintings as *Soir Bleu* (1914) show Hopper conjuring—and conjuring adroitly—with Manet, but they are merely by Hopper, not of Hopper.

It took him until the mid-1920s to effect that metamorphosis. Some hints of the maturation can be found in his bravura watercolors from the period—lighthouses in Maine; rooftops in Gloucester, Mass.; city scenes in New York. These eager domestic excursions are slightly stagy but astringently fastidious. Indeed, everything about the six-foot-five artist was fastidious: his dress, his personal manner, his art. At some point in the 1920s, he managed the trick of endowing that fastidiousness with hints of unplumbable mystery. You feel you know where you are in the land of Hopper, even if familiarity is edged with the mildly disquieting sense of forgetfulness about how exactly you got there.

Hopper began his career as a commercial artist. He hated the work, but the discipline equipped him with a bag of visual tricks and ingrained in him a sense of visual economy. There are no wasted objects in Hopper's pictures, nothing whatsoever



Office at Night, *1940*

Mr. Kimball is co-editor and co-publisher of *The New Criterion*.

extraneous. Not many artists of his period would have depicted litter on a city street, but only in Hopper are you made to feel that pristine tidiness is an overwhelming aesthetic imperative. It is not just that there is no litter in Hopper's pictures: You somehow feel that litter doesn't even exist. Hopper is somewhere said to have remarked that his goal was to achieve "the greatest possible austerity without the loss of emotion." That seems accurate enough, but Hopper's real canniness lay in making that austerity seem so plush.

There is, however, another side to Hopper's mature work, one that undercuts its warmth and complicates its simplicity. Once he hit his artistic stride, Hopper consistently insinuated an element of existential melancholy, a dollop of unanswerable loneliness into his pictures. His shadows are long, his views foreshortened, his figures as mute as they are blunt and unarticulated. Hopper's emotional range is narrow—it seldom wanders from these pools of quiet resignation—but utterly distinctive. The "Hopperesque" is that visual encapsulation of slightly morbid dissatisfaction, never sharp enough to blossom into anguish or even overt definition, but likewise never susceptible of human remedy. You can instantly recognize it at 50 paces: an unmistakable amalgam of pensive moods and atmospheres.

Both elements—the prettiness and the pensiveness—undergird Hopper's popularity, the former making him accessible and aesthetically reassuring, the latter injecting his work with the appurtenances of depth and existential gravity.

It is not everyone's cup of tea. When I saw this show in Boston, I overheard a young man complaining that "not one person in these pictures is happy." This is true. But it is also beside the point. Or, rather, it is exactly the point: That failure to connect, that enveloping silence, is what Hopper is all about. Take that away and you excise the germ, the core of the work. What you have left are moderately accomplished Sunday paintings. The curious thing is how impersonal it all is. Happiness isn't the issue. Hopper's characters have emotions but no biographies. They exist not as individuals but as visual memoranda, notes for a script that the viewer is invited to complete.

Some of Hopper's pictures are instinct with pent-up sexuality—less his nudes, I think, than the slightly voyeuristic paintings (there are several) like *Office at Night* (1940). Here, the characteristic Hopper touch is the directionlessness of the passion. The secretary at the file cabinet in *Office at Night* all but bursts out of her tight-fitting blue dress, but she occupies an oasis of feeling entirely cut off from the man at work at his desk. They are separated by only a few feet of space but inhabit utterly distinct worlds.

There is a reason that the people in Hopper's pictures seem so inaccessible. They are, when you come right down to it, utterly dispensable. Sure, the woman in *Automat* seems the picture of forlorn loneliness, but the point is that this is less a picture of an individual than a transcription of a generalized emotional state (interesting, by the way, that Hopper's most frequent model was his wife, Jo). Pictures like *Nighthawks* or *Chop Suey* are so popular in part because they contain embryonic narratives that viewers seize upon and complete. Those folks overseen at midnight in the diner in *Nighthawks*, the couple glimpsed from an adjacent city window: There are little dramas waiting to unfold here. All they need is your collusion.

In some ways, Hopper's greatest pictures are also his most abstract. I am thinking not of his depopulated street scenes like *Drug Store* (1927) or *Early Sunday Morning* but late works like *Rooms by the Sea* (1951) and *Sun in an Empty Room* (1963), in which the emotional burden is carried almost entirely by intersecting planes of light. How effective, how moving those pictures are, but also how evacuated, how bare. Query: Would we be able to appreciate, to see, these works as quintessentially Hopper had we not had the experience of his earlier, more richly furnished pictures? I do not know the answer to that question. It is curious, though, that in these late works Hopper edges toward—or maybe he goes far beyond—the surrealism of a Magritte or de Chirico. You see it in the substance as well as the style of these pictures. Hopper is like Wallace Stevens's "Snow Man," beholding "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." The essential emotional tension remains rooted in Hopper's homespun vision of everyday life, but the void upon which Hopper cast his eyes turns out to be much closer, much more thoroughly diffused in the here and now than we had ever imagined. **NR**

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■ MUSIC ■

A Winning Quintet

JAY NORDLINGER

Let's take a quick look at five young musicians—a conductor, a violinist, a singer, a pianist, and a composer. All of them are winners; I would not waste your time, just now, with mediocrity. We'll save the composer for last, composers being the crucial men in music—the truly creative ones. Without them, nothing to play (or sing).

Begin with that conductor—Gustavo Dudamel. He's just about the hottest thing on the music scene now, the subject of endless hype. But the hype is not undeserved. Dudamel is a Venezuelan born in 1981. He leads the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra, hitherto obscure. Starting in 2009, he will lead the Los Angeles Philharmonic—never too obscure.

His latest CD, with the Simón Bolívar orchestra, purveys Mahler's Symphony No. 5. (The label is Deutsche Grammophon.) The picture on the cover is casual-glamorous: Dudamel is a lithe, photographable guy, with big musician's hair—Rubinstein hair, my grandmother would call it (a reference to Anton, b. 1829, not Artur, b. 1887). The Mahler Fifth has been important to Dudamel; he won a competition with it. The work is "a musical reference point for my life," he says. For other lives, too.

In this Fifth, Dudamel is assured, incisive, and charismatic—very charismatic. This is a key and intangible quality in conducting, as in other fields. In this performance is an electricity—even in quieter moments. Perhaps especially in quieter moments. Anyone can just bang it out. Dudamel keeps a pulse, never dawdling, never self-indulging. But he does not overdrive the music, either. Every note counts: counts without being fussed over. This is an achievement.

The Scherzo has its coursing excitement, and the famous, beloved Adagietto is superb. Dudamel takes it at a smart, breathable tempo, and he infuses it with guts and heart. He does not treat it too gently, does not regard it as a fragile egg, about to break. At the same time, the music has its surpassing spirituality. And the Finale has energy, daring, bounce—almost a jazziness. The young Venezuelan players obviously respond to their young leader, and so, of course, do audiences all over.

You will not want to throw away your Klaus Tennstedt or Rafael Kubelik—but you may want to make room for the Mahler Fifth of Gustavo Dudamel.

Our violinist is Lisa Batiashvili, who, as that "vili" suggests, was born in Georgia. (Shevardnadze's, not Carter's.) The year was 1979; and, when she was eleven, she went with her family to Germany. The political situation at home had become impossible.

Late last season, Batiashvili played Shostakovich's Concerto No. 1 with the New York Philharmonic, and it was one of the best performances of the year: correct, hair-raising, shattering. You sort of lived with that performance for days after. And, at the beginning of this new season, Batiashvili played the Beethoven Concerto with the Philharmonic—and it was warm, humane, and moving.

The extraordinary composer Michael Hersch

RICHARD ANDERSON

I've taken to quoting a saying I learned from Jerome Rose, a pianist and teacher in New York: "You play who you are." From Lisa Batiashvili comes a kind of goodness, or nobility of purpose, in addition to the technical and other skills. Does that sound too gooey? So be it.

Her just-released CD, from Sony Classical, brings two concertos: the Sibelius and a new one, by another Finnish composer, Magnus Lindberg. Joining Batiashvili is the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sakari Oramo (himself an outstanding musician). And the violinist plays with her usual intelligence, taste, and musicality. She may be a young musician, but she's a notably mature one. Her virtuosity can be taken for granted; it is merely a means of high expression.

A word about Lindberg: He's just short of 50, and he wrote his concerto for Batiashvili. It is a piece worth hearing, containing some invention and beauty. And, of course, Lindberg is lucky in his soloist.

Our singer is Measha Brueggergosman, a soprano from New Brunswick, born in 1977. Interesting moniker, huh? She was born Gosman and married a man named Bruegger; they combined. When she was a kid, she studied the piano, and there's a story about why she switched to singing: Aged 15, she was about to play the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the local orchestra—but she got a bad case of nerves. Singing seemed an easier life.

Which is extraordinary. In most people's estimation, singing is the most nerve-wracking activity in music.

Anyway, Brueggergosman has now made a debut album, for Deutsche Grammophon. It's called *Surprise*—and the first song on it is "Surprise!" by William Bolcom. (In the album title, the label has ditched the exclamation point.) Bolcom is one of the most prolific American composers, often called "eclectic." And Brueggergosman sings his *Cabaret Songs*, texts by Arnold Weinstein. She also sings Schoenberg's *Cabaret Songs*—and if you don't know this side of Schoenberg, you should. She closes her album with five songs of Satie, also cabaret-ish.

You have to have personality to sing this music, several extra doses—and Brueggergosman does. She has a big, lyrical, semi-smoky soprano, with an immediacy to it. An aliveness. You can tell that she enjoys singing, and her enjoyment is catching. A few years ago, they made a documentary about her: *Spirit in Her Voice*. The title is apt.

One of the Bolcom songs is "Amor," a saucy, delicious number (which the mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade sings consummately). The song speaks of a rare, wonderful, giddy day, and contains one of the great socialist lines in music: "The poor stopped taking less, the rich stopped needing more." Ah, well. Donning his hat of pianist, Bolcom accompanies Brueggergosman in some of the Satie songs. And the soprano sings her Satie with due seduction and earthiness—the right touch of sin.

She is obviously an interesting and magnetic woman, going her own way, and loving life. It has become customary for recording artists to thank a number of people in the fine print of their CD booklets. (This is kind of like an Oscar acceptance speech.) Brueggergosman begins, "Inexpressible gratitude and mega shout-outs from Measha to the Lord Jesus Christ . . ."

Jonathan Biss is an American pianist born in 1980. There are distinguished musicians in his family—including his mother, the violinist Miriam Fried. Like most people, he can play indifferently, or worse; he can also play superbly (I think in particular of a Mozart concerto one evening). His new album, from EMI Classics, gives us four Beethoven sonatas. Three of them are very well-known, and two of those have nicknames: the "Pathétique" and the "Pastoral"; the third one is the Sonata in E major, Op. 109.

But Biss also includes Beethoven's Sonata in E minor, Op. 90—a small masterpiece, an overlooked gem in two movements. In the first of these movements, Biss makes much of Beethoven's contrasts: He is biting, suspenseful, exciting—even tiger-like. And in the second movement, he sings serenely, peacefully, just as the composer wants.

In addition, Biss has written some intelligent and beautiful liner notes for his CD. They end strikingly. He says that it's both an "honor" and a "responsibility" to play Beethoven. Playing Beethoven, he says, "compels you to make yourself a better musician, a better person. I have tried; I shall keep trying." With understanding and humility like that, how can he fail of success?

Finally, our composer: Michael Hersch, an American born in 1971. He is a brilliant man, occupying realms that seem far off. And he has composed one of the most unusual pieces in memory: *The Vanishing Pavilions* for piano, a work in two "books," as Hersch calls them, and taking about two hours and 20 minutes to play. Hersch himself has recorded the work for Vanguard Classics. Apart from his composing, Hersch is a brilliant pianist, and there could not be a better advocate of his own music.

The Vanishing Pavilions is inspired by the poetry of Christopher Middleton, an Englishman—now in his 80s—whom Hersch met at the American Academy in Berlin. And the work is barely fathomable: reflecting terror, agony, wonder. I hesitate to describe it. It seems both intensely personal and universal. It is ferocious, desperate, manic; titanic, daunting, world-containing; visionary, apocalyptic, inexorable. You sometimes want to look away from it; it can be terrible to contemplate. And yet you still heed it.

Elements of this work are Scriabin-like—but you cannot compare it to anything. At least I can't. You sense that the piece is both reacting to this world and striving for something beyond. I hate to get mystical on you, but it's that kind of piece.

I intend to live with *The Vanishing Pavilions* for a while longer. It has gotten under my skin, as it must; it has even disturbed my sleep. A first hearing takes a considerable amount of time, especially given the lives many of us now lead. But one hearing is plainly insufficient. Michael Hersch has something to say, and he bears listening to. **NR**

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■ THE STRAGGLER ■

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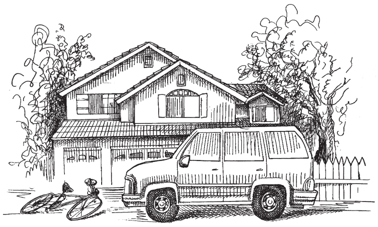

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

> Whenever war is spoken of
> I find
> The war that was called Great invades
> the mind
> —Vernon Scannell, "The Great War"

Some years ago my colleague Florence King declared her ambition to rehabilitate the word "spinster." Her efforts seem to have borne little fruit. Neither my local newspaper nor my local TV station ever refers to anyone as a spinster. Nor have I heard anyone so designated in private conversation, not since my childhood.

"Spinster" is certainly a fine old word. It has been used in its current sense since at least the early 17th century, when the lexicographer John Minsheu, a contemporary of Shakespeare, described the word as "onely added in Obligations, Euidences, and Writings, vnto maids vnmarried." It is all a bit unfair. "Bachelor," whose current meaning goes much further back, at least to Chaucer's time, is still heard, but "spinster," never. Yet perhaps, with the 20th century behind us, and with all proper respect to Florence King, this is a case where we should let sleeping words lie.

These reflections arose from reading reviews in the British magazines of Virginia Nicholson's book *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived Without Men After the First World War*. The book seems not yet to have been published on this side of the pond, but I shall certainly read it when it does appear. No person born in Britain in the 20th century can ever tire of reading about "the war that was called Great."

As awful as that war was for British men (not to mention the men of this and other nations, who are beyond my scope here), it may have been worse for women. One of the most heartbreaking books ever written is Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth*. Twenty years old in 1914, Vera Brittain lost to the war, one by one, all the men she cared about, beginning with the love of her life, the poet Roland Leighton. He was expected home from the Western Front for Christmas of 1915. Brittain sat up late on Christmas Day waiting for him, to be greeted next morning with the news he had been killed on December 23. The others followed him, ending with her adored only brother in the last months of the war.

So it was for untold numbers of women. Virginia Nicholson quotes the headmistress of a tony girls' school breaking the news to her senior pupils in 1917: "I have come to tell you a terrible fact. Only one out of ten of you girls can ever marry. . . . Nearly all the men who might have married you have been killed. You will have to make your way in the world as best you can." This was actually a bit hyperbolic. As Niall Ferguson notes in *The Pity of War*: "Fewer British men were killed during the war than had emigrated in the decade before it." Seven hundred thousand is still a lot of young men to die in four years, with some corresponding number hopelessly maimed; and the losses were disproportionately from the middle and upper classes, which supplied most of the British army's junior officers.

The novelist Ivy Compton-Burnett, born 1884, had seven sisters: None of the eight ever married. Two committed suicide. For 30 years after the war Ivy shared an apartment with the journalist Margaret Jourdain. There was nothing improper about the relationship. Asked, after Margaret's death, if she needed to retrieve anything from her room, Ivy replied indignantly: "I have never been inside Margaret's room."

This restraint was not universal. Paul Fussell, in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, notes that "after the war women dramatically outnumbered men, and a common sight in the thirties—to be seen, for some reason, especially on railway trains—was the standard middle-aged Lesbian couple in tweeds, who had come together as girls after each had lost a fiancé, lover, or husband." Radclyffe Hall's pioneering lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* had a ready-made readership when it appeared in 1928.

It didn't help that Britain still had a big overseas empire to staff. From the mid–19th century on, some high proportion of the nation's eligible bachelors was abroad. Long before WWI, the steamships bringing hopeful young spinsters to British India were known as "the fishing fleet." In the 1920s, with the stock of middle-class bachelors much depleted, the fisherfolk became correspondingly more numerous and desperate. (There is a gruesome example in George Orwell's *Burmese Days*.)

I can remember some of those war spinsters and widows. They were in their 50s and 60s when I was growing up in a provincial English town. My father had taken lodgings with a couple of them before his marriage, and our family had kept up the acquaintance. This particular couple—let us call them Mrs. Benn and Miss Trott—lived in genteel poverty near the town's main park, a favorite spot of ours on summer weekends.

There is not the remotest possibility that these two ladies were bound by anything more than companionship. One of my American friends claims to have had an aunt of such unassailable primness that she would correct people who referred to Walt Disney by name: "It's *Walter*." I can't recall whether Mrs. Benn rose to those heights, but she was formidably respectable, and grimly reproving of such childhood sins as elbows on the table.

Miss Trott has left no impression on my memory at all, but the manner of her eventual passing speaks for itself. My mother, a professional nurse (who, by the way, was described on her marriage certificate as "Spinster"), could be depended on for information about all the town's interesting deaths. Miss Trott, she told me when I was at home from college one summer, had been admitted to the general hospital with a breast cancer so advanced the tumor had burst through the skin. Asked why she had not sought treatment before, the poor woman replied that she had been unwilling to submit to an intimate examination. She died within days.

I think Carlyle was wrong: The truly dismal science is not economics, but demography. A dip in the population graph: 700,000 young men turned to dust. A bulge in the sex ratio: untold quantities of sorrow, stoicism, and loneliness, of unwilling spinsterhood. Let the word go, Florence. **NR**

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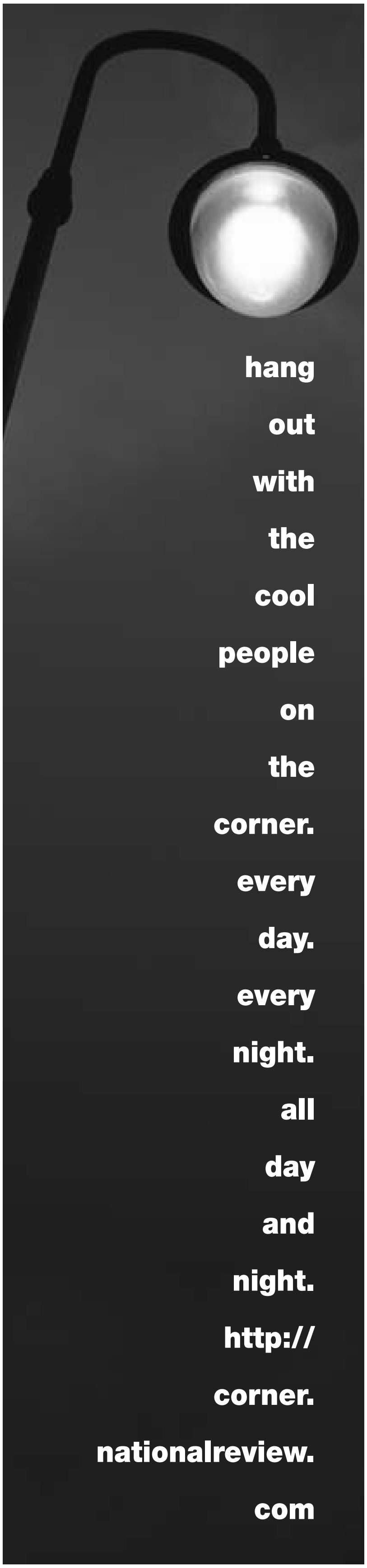

on the right

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Religion Marginalized

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 2

PITY John McCain, for whom everything has gone sour in the past period, taking him from lead candidate for the Republican nomination to the cellar. Some years ago, after hearing what John McCain withstood in North Vietnam, I pledged never to write a negative word about him, and over the years it has required very few beads of charity to stand by him. His latest difficulty started out sounding worthy of another medal of honor, to wear alongside the one he earned through the efforts of the North Vietnamese torturers.

What happened was that Senator McCain was a guest on the website Beliefnet.com. He was there to answer questions about his religious beliefs, and his answers were recorded on video and are available for those who seek to examine the gods of presidential candidates.

The interviewer started off by asking: How important should religious belief be in a U.S. presidential contest?

Well, answered the senator, "I think the No. 1 issue people should make [in the] selection of the president of the United States is, 'Will this person carry on in the Judeo-Christian principled tradition that has made this nation the greatest experiment in the history of mankind?' "

When asked specifically about a Muslim candidate, he said: "I just have to say in all candor that since this nation was founded primarily on Christian principles . . . personally, I prefer someone who I know has a solid grounding in my faith."

Gasp. Within one day, poor Senator McCain had called the Beliefnet people back and said he needed to amplify his answers to yesterday's questions. Now he added: "I would vote for a Muslim if he or she was the candidate best able to lead the country and defend our political values."

That was fast going but not fast enough.

What is happening is the reification of a civic conflict of the most fundamental order. We have for many years, in the talkative corners of the world, pretty much agreed not to emphasize in public the distinctive qualities of our own faith. The implication is that, just to begin with, there are no (important) differences between Protestants and Catholics. For reasons bloodily baptized in World War II, we threw in the Jews—no differences, really. This didn't mean that there could not be a survival of Jewish theology, or seminaries devoted to explaining the Dominican understanding of the deity. But it was saying something on the order of: We pledge the freedom of religious practice and admire those institutions working along similar lines to our own.

What McCain said on the Beliefnet program was not quite in line with this orthodoxy. He recognized this almost immediately and took the opportunity to retrench. He resorted to the First Amendment parachute, which is that Congress shall make no law establishing religion, nor denying to anyone the free practice thereof.

Analyses have been written, but not I think pondered by civil servants, that one way to ignore religion is to deprive it of singular meaning. When the Mormons decided in the 19th century that polygamy was required by their religion, prosecutors in various places worked to stamp out the practice. But as time went on, interest in the remaining polygamists died down—at least until a Mormon, Mitt Romney, declared for president.

It is all very well for Senator McCain to say that he would have no problem voting for a Muslim for president if he or she was the best candidate. Surely qualifications need to be placed on such effusions of equality. Would it violate the First Amendment for a state to ordain that any Muslim running for public office would have to endorse votes for women?

Christianity is supposed to be a way of life, and it was a way of life that Senator McCain initially spoke of in his Beliefnet interview. Islam is a way of life—there is nothing in Islam excepting a way of life. We're at about the point when Christians have to admit that we were there when they crucified Our Lord.

The War, in the Vernacular

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 5

THE flap featuring Rush Limbaugh, Media Matters, and MoveOn.org illustrates the importance not only of keeping facts straight but also of lining up symmetrical perspectives.

For instance: An individual soldier fighting in Iraq can believe that the war is ill begotten, that American military leaders are doing a bad job, and that the world would be better off if the U.S. were to pull out. If that soldier were overheard ventilating these preachments and hauled in to the company commander for questioning, what might one expect to hear?

"Soldier, you've been criticizing the conduct of the war and the thinking behind that conduct. Are you protesting your role in current operations?"

"No. No, sir. Are you, sir, suggesting that I am not entitled to criticize the war?"

"No. I'm not saying exactly that. But I am saying that criticisms of the conduct of a war can encourage disloyalty, and that cannot be tolerated in the military."

"I understand that, sir. Sir, you haven't told anybody around here that I am a 'phony soldier,' have you?"

"Certainly not. A phony soldier is a guy who gives the impression that he was fighting on the battlefront when actually he was far removed from action. He is also 'phony'—not merely as a soldier but as a human being—if he is out there telling people that most of the soldiers engaged in the Iraq War don't believe in it. There is something that separates an ordinary citizen from a soldier. The soldier has to have a special sense of corporate responsibility. And he has to remind himself that our army is nowadays made up of volunteers."

"Did Rush Limbaugh make that confusion?"

"No. He was criticizing the phony soldier we've mentioned—a specific individual who had falsified his war record—but he was hardly including in that category every soldier who has reservations about the war."

"Why is this happening?"

"The stakes are pretty big in Washington, and elsewhere. There are outfits determined to discredit the war. They'll seize on any remark made that contributes to their story: that this is a losing war, badly conceived, incompetently executed. That General Petraeus is a windbag, doing political favors rather than using his own experience to give the American people an honest evaluation of the war. These folk will construe any criticism of the war by a soldier as one more sign of weakness, of doubt, of subjective recognition that the war should not have been fought in the first place."

"Sir?"

"Yes, corporal."

"Would it be okay to say that I, Corporal John Landers, would agree with that appraisal?"

"No, corporal. It wouldn't be okay, not so long as you're in uniform. You have your own thoughts, and inevitably you will share them with the soldiers in your unit. But you have to be governed by having something to do with the prospects of an enterprise that is a commitment of the government of the United States. As long as you are a soldier, you are a functioning part of that enterprise."

"And when I leave the army?"

"You will be free to explain that if General Petraeus had just been a little wiser, he'd have followed your advice."

The Bum Said . . .

NEW YORK, OCTOBER 9

In days (long) gone by, the tradition was that gentlemen engaged in media work do not disparage other gentlemen engaged in media work. The protocol was blatantly violated from time to time. How, in the age of Drew Pearson, could one have got through a year without squawking, reviling, protesting—perhaps dwelling on the case for the repeal of the First Amendment?

Still, it came always as something of a surprise when professional antagonism was acted on. Most recently we have had the case of Dan Rather against CBS. But as far as the general public is concerned, this is not a quarrel in which personal feelings are heavily engaged. Rather says that CBS deprived him of the opportunity to back his charge in the 2004 campaign that President Bush had faked his military record. There was nothing personal in that fight (that we know of), and the protagonists no doubt, as they confer with their lawyers, consider themselves observant of the rules for corporate criticisms.

But there isn't any way to remove Robert Novak from the hot seat here. In his widely read book, *The Prince of Darkness*, he lets out some pretty virulent stuff against, in particular, one man who is as active as an orbiting planet in partisan politics.

In the chapter in which Novak recounts his dissociation from CNN, he lets a great deal hang out. Novak is perhaps the premier journalistic figure in the land, an eminence he earned by years and decades of very hard work digging up stories, analyzing the news, and urging perspectives that he found compelling.

He was of course a fixture on several CNN programs, primarily *Crossfire* and *Capital Gang*, and then, after their demise, *Strategy Session*. These programs were establishmentarian political jousts, Novak among the most prominent right-wingers. On the other side were sundry men and women of the left, but one of them has a way of coating his dissent with a bile that even a hardened antagonist finds difficult to come to terms with.

One day in 2005, Novak was appearing on *Strategy Session* opposite James Carville. On the air, Carville accused Novak of trying to curry favor with the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. Novak protested. "Just let me finish what I'm going to say, James," Novak quotes the script. "Please, I know you hate to hear me, but you have—"

The book recounts, "Before I could finish that, a shouting Carville overrode what I had to say. 'He's got to show these right-wingers that he's got backbone,' Carville yelled. 'Show them you're tough.' Two and a half years of coping with Carville's ad hominem attacks welled up in me. 'Well, I think that's bulls***,' I said."

Novak rose from the desk. "I removed my microphone and stalked off the set."

The new gang running CNN had been looking for an excuse to dump Novak. Although he apologized immediately, CNN called his conduct "unacceptable" and let it be known that he was off CNN indefinitely. "I did not think I had committed a hanging offense," Novak writes. "Mark Shields in the past had twice used the same obscenity I employed, . . . without comment by management. [CNN boss Jon] Klein's favorite TV critic, Jon Stewart, used much worse language in describing me. Indeed, I received a lot of favorable comment from conservatives who commented how pleased they were that I had finally told Carville how obnoxious he was."

Now this last is not properly used as mitigative of the offense. A commentator will almost certainly bring pleasure to a great many people by lambasting his enemy. Granted, Novak was here attempting to draw attention to the special odium Carville lives, eats, and sleeps with. I had an encounter a few years ago with him, a debate at the University of Oklahoma. After what he said about me, a tribunal concerned with truth and justice should have ordered a firing squad to empty its guns at me at the end of the evening—or at Carville, for making allegations so hideous.

What happened here is that CNN eased its most productive journalist off the airwaves, while it kept Carville, soulmate and business partner of Democratic consultant Bob Shrum, a vigilante against the American right.

What Novak's book does not do is devise an acceptable means by which excesses can be curbed. Probably he has discovered what so many have over the decades, that when rhetoric is heated, and the audience is permissive, you can't succeed in eliminating foul play. But we all suffer when the exercise of it has such an effect as to eliminate a Novak, while retaining a Carville.

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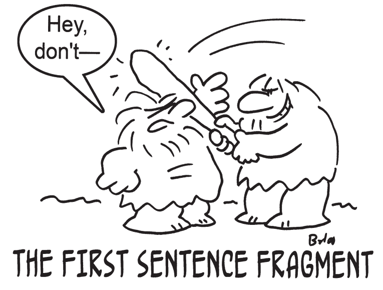


happy warrior

MARK STEYN

Gaia Is Angry

Apparently there are still one or two holdouts who decline to prostrate themselves before Al Gore. As ABC reporter David Wright fretted, “Even the Nobel Prize is not going to be enough to silence the naysayers . . .”

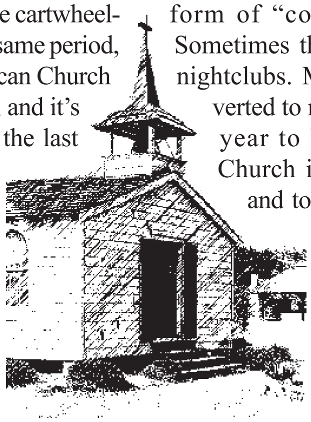
Ah, so true. Say what you like about Al’s predecessor in the pantheon of glory, the late Yasser Arafat, but there was a guy who knew how to silence naysayers and, when he needed to, he didn’t leave it to the luster of his Nobel.

To escape the wall-to-wall Aldulation I jumped in the truck and found myself going past a Vermont dairy farm I drive by every couple of years. Only this time the Holsteins were gone. The field was still there, well mown, but the soft low of cattle came there not. I asked a friend of mine in the dairying business and she told me the farm had gone under, but don’t worry, she added dryly, the folks who bought it put the land in “conservation easement.” And then she rolled her eyes, and we moved on to other subjects. The cows have gone, the farmers have gone, but the pasture will be preserved in perpetuity. Sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference between “conservation” and the neutron bomb.

The urge to preserve the “environment”—Vermont fields, Amazonian insects, low-lying Pacific atolls—is a curious one given how easily we shrug off everything else in the landscape. The other day, I spotted a small news item about the United Church of Canada—i.e., northern Congregationalists. Between 1961 and 2001, the country’s population increased from 18 million to 31 million, but the UCC’s congregational rolls fell by 39 percent.

Needless to say, the Moderator—the church’s head guy—isn’t bothered. “I see the change as liberating,” the Rev. David Giuliano told the *National Post*, “because we don’t have to hold on to that anymore.” It’s like Wal-Mart: The sooner you lose all that mass-market aisle-clogging traffic, the sooner you can be the little boutique specialty niche business you’ve always wanted to be.

And, if the Reverend Giuliano’s feeling liberated with his 39 percent drop-off, the Anglican archbishops must be cartwheeling through the naves. In the same period, the membership of the Anglican Church of Canada fell by 53 percent, and it’s still picking up speed. Will the last gay vicar in the remaining unsold cathedral please turn off the lights? Circa mid-century. Okay, more like 2030.



It’s one of the curious features of the age that man demands the natural environment be preserved in an artificially unchanging state while being entirely insouciant to the abandonment of large slabs of his own broader environment. Had 53 percent or even 39 percent of the Antarctic ice shelf melted away, even we naysayers might be silenced. Yet the all-but-complete secularization of virtually the entire Western world except the United States in little more than a generation is assumed to be the merest adjustment with no possible downside, unless you’re the benighted paranoid Americans too superstitious to get with the program.

“Canadians, by contrast, are far less fearful,” pronounced Kenneth Kidd in the *Toronto Star* last year. “Americans now increasingly use churches as their replacement for a sense of community lost to long working hours and lengthy commutes.” This was in a report about how a trip to the Tim Hortons donut chain has become the Sunday-morning communal ritual in Canadian life: Americans worship the cross, Canucks worship the cruller. Don’t those poor dumb Yanks realize it’s no contest?

If you go to the oldest villages in Europe, you’ll find that the church is not some latterday compensation for a lost sense of community but one of the very oldest building blocks of “community.” In Heysham, England, St. Peter’s Church dates from the 6th century, and it’s the second church on the site. A millennium and a half or so back, the original 4th-century wooden structure had to be replaced, so they embarked on the current building.

If town planners physically removed every ancient church from every square or village green, even post-Christian Europe would notice. But they don’t get removed. Sometimes they just stand there, empty but maintained, in a protean form of “conservation easement.” Sometimes they get converted to gay nightclubs. More often they get converted to mosques, as happened this year to Mount Zion Methodist Church in Clitheroe, Lancashire, and to a church in the Neukölln neighborhood of Berlin.

The Euroleft is complacent about radical Islam because it assumes that Islam will prove as feeble in the face of secular seduction as Anglicanism and Congregationalism and even Catholicism have proved. But the shrewder Muslims understand that Euro-secularism is a vacuum, in which alternatives incubate. As Burt Bacharach and Hal David put it in their theme song for some ancient Michael Caine shagathon:

What’s it all about, Alfie?
Is it just for the moment we live?

Not many people want to live “just for the moment,” so in the absence of that old-time religion some of us invent new ones: Gaia is angry! We must toss another virgin in the volcano! But there are no virgins left, so perhaps Gaia can be placated with a new SUV, because, after all, it’s consumerist hedonism that’s the problem, not the sexual kind. Islam figures that environmentalism isn’t proof that the West is post-Christian and progressive, but just the umpteenth sign that it’s up for grabs.

As Henri de Lubac wrote in *Le drame de l’humanisme athée*, his famous reflection on Europe’s civilizational crisis, “It is not true, as is sometimes said, that man cannot organize the world without God. What is true is that, without God, he can only organize it against man.” A pseudo-faith that posits man as an intruder upon the Garden would seem to be an almost parodic illustration of Lubac’s thesis. **NR**

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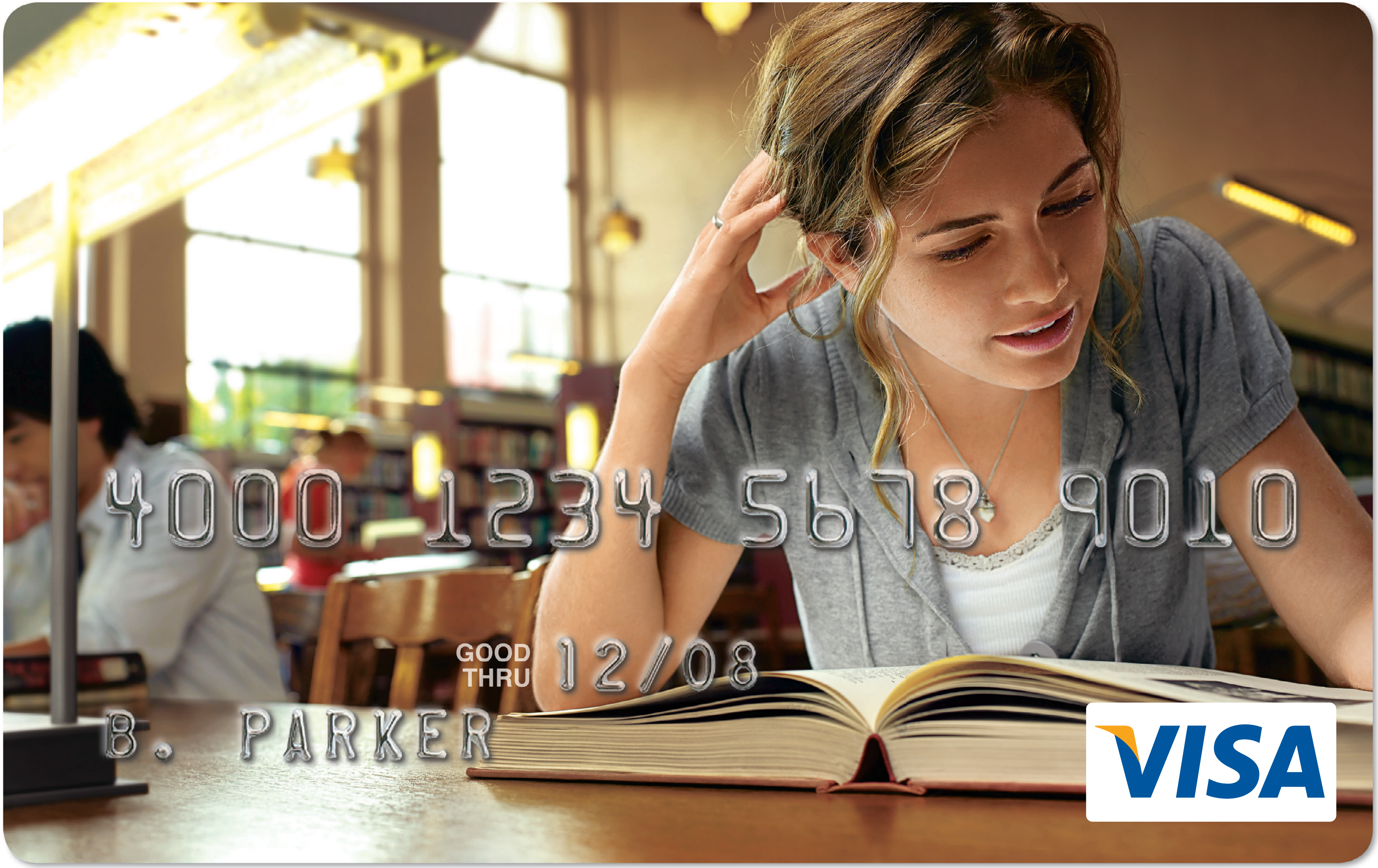

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